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OUTLAW WOMAN

A MEMOIR OF THE WAR YEARS, 1960-1975

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR *OUTLAW WOMAN*:

"*Outlaw Woman* is the story, bold and honest, of Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's extraordinary journey—political, ideological, personal—through the sixties and early seventies. Coming from a working-class upbringing in Oklahoma, she moved in and out of every important feminist and revolutionary movement of that remarkable time in American history. She illuminates all those experiences with unsparring scrutiny and emerges with a fierce, admirable independence."

—Howard Zinn, author of *A People's History of the United States*

"It's impossible to finish reading this compelling memoir and not think, 'What a totally amazing person!' The book traces the complex, ever-deepening evolution of one feminist determined to help create a better society. But it is also about an entire historical era when people were struggling for social justice around the world—and very much so in the United States. Against such a background, we see this woman become a movement leader, unique in her rural working-class, 'Okie' origin, fighting injustice with a powerful mind and spirit."

—Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez, Chicana activist and author

"This is a wonderfully evocative account of a remarkable life: harrowing and joyful, searching and achieving, a life that brings together threads of a complex, troubled, and rewarding era, a life that really made a difference to moving toward a more humane and just world."

—Noam Chomsky

"*Outlaw Woman* is a memoir of an extraordinary time in U.S. history, and it is one that doesn't get bogged down in accusation, scandal, or idealistic reverie. The roots of contemporary feminism are here. The United States war in Vietnam is here. Native American and African American struggles are here. And the struggles that shaped generations of U.S. rev-

olutionaries: Cuba, South Africa, Chile, Nicaragua. Roxanne's journey through some of the era's most important movements and events allows us to revisit those times—whatever our own position, then or now. *Outlaw Woman* is stark, unrelenting, honest, and evocative—of a time when a diverse subculture cared, a time that should make us proud.”

—Margaret Randall, activist and author of
Sandino's Daughters Revisited

“Official history is told by the conquerors and those in power. That has changed: women and men who fought the dominant powers have challenged the official version, seized control of their own voices and opened the collective eye to the prism that history truly is. Roxanne Dunbar tells the story of her growth as a woman whose heritage and history had been hidden, cut off. She speaks honestly about conflicts and uncertainties as she moves forward through the 1960s. She explains her growth and coming of age as a woman of conscience and political action through the lens of the unofficial history of those who struggled. This book contributes to the dynamic of people's history from a woman's point of view.”

—Marilyn Buck, activist and political prisoner

“*Outlaw Woman* is a vivid and compelling account of the author's journey through the upheaval, hope and ultimate implosion of the 1960s. With a keen eye for detail and a crisp prose style, Dunbar-Ortiz evokes the heady combination of idealism and trauma that defined that era and transformed her from an apolitical, married college student into a notorious feminist leader and, later, an underground revolutionary. This is fascinating history, and especially important for young people who are trying to make sense of the socio-political moment in America today. *Outlaw Woman* is an honest and courageous attempt to examine and reclaim some of the history of an era that still divides and perplexes us thirty years later. A wonderful and important read.”

—Sam Green, director of *The Weather Underground*

“Roxanne Dunbar gives the lie to the myth that all New Left activists of the '60s and '70s were spoiled children of the suburban middle classes. Read this book to find out what are the roots of radicalism—anti-racist, pro-worker, feminist—for a child of working-class white and Native American Okie background.”

—Mark Rudd, SDS, Columbia University strike leader

“With young people leading movements against the prison industrial complex and global capitalism, the need for multigenerational dialogue about experiences and lessons learned from previous struggles is enormous. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's *Outlaw Woman* takes us into the heart of the women's liberation movement, grassroots anti-war organizing and solidarity work with third-world liberation struggles around the world and in the United States. *Outlaw Woman* is a fierce and honest narrative about organizing, resistance, and the passion to remake the world.”

—Chris Crass, Food Not Bombs

“I stand in awe of Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. She is a survivor, capital ‘S.’ She was there in the middle of it all. Now I understand what was going on with the movement outside of Indian country during those amazing years.”

—Madonna Gilbert Thunder Hawk, Lakota activist and
AIM leader at Alcatraz and Wounded Knee

“What I like about Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's memoir writings is that she places herself in an historical context. When you read about her life, you also learn history from the perspective of someone who comes from the poor and has fought for the poor. In sharing honestly her mistakes, Roxanne teaches us not to be afraid of contradictions. For anyone who believes the future of humanity necessitates ending corporate greed and power, this book is a must.”

—Pamela Chude Allen, founder of Radical Women,
author of *Free Space*

OUTLAW WOMAN
A MEMOIR OF THE WAR YEARS, 1960–1975

ROXANNE DUNBAR-ORTIZ



CITY LIGHTS
SAN FRANCISCO

© 2001 by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

Cover design by Rex Ray

Book design by Elaine Katzenberger

Typography by Harvest Graphics

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Ortiz, Roxanne Dunbar.

Outlaw woman: a memoir of the war years, 1960-1975 / by
Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-87286-390-5

1. Ortiz, Roxanne Dunbar. 2. Feminists—United States—
Biography. 3. Women political activists—United States—Biography.
4. Women revolutionaries—United States—Biography.
5. Vietnamese Conflict, 1961-1975. I. Title.

HQ123.073 A3 2002

305.42'092—dc21

[B]

2001042124



In memory

of

Audrey Rosenthal, 1940-1967

who died in South Africa in the struggle against apartheid

and

in honor

of

all those, past and present,

committed to creating a just and peaceful world

and

for

the war resisters and deserters,

and our political prisoners who continue

to pay the price for our struggles

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CITY LIGHTS BOOKS are edited by Lawrence Ferlinghetti and
Nancy J. Peters and published at the City Lights Bookstore, 261
Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94133

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

IN MAY 1968, a few weeks before her sixtieth birthday, my mother died. I had not communicated with her for fifteen years, and when I read my brother's letter informing me of her death I felt only relief. And, strangely, I felt free, free to finally mourn her life, and her death. For a month, I sat at a small desk in a rented room writing my life story, and hers. I wrote by hand in hardcover notebooks, writing on both sides of each page, filling six of them. I shelved the notebooks to get on with the birth of the women's liberation movement, and didn't take them out again for twenty years. When I did, it was to write a memoir, *Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie*, which narrative told the story of my early life and ended with my move to San Francisco in 1960.

Outlaw Woman picks up where *Red Dirt* left off, but it is a very different kind of memoir. It is the story of my development as a political radical during the period I think of as the war years, 1960–1975, the Vietnam War at first in the background, then moving to the center, my youth consumed by it, the rest of my life determined by it.

The 1960s paralleled the decade of my twenties, and like so many others, the person I had become by the end of those ten years would have

been unrecognizable to the person I was at the beginning. I am one of the 5 to 10 percent of the adult U.S. population of the 1960s who, by the end of that decade, had come to consider herself a lifelong revolutionary, part of a global revolution against greed, war, patriarchy, capitalism, imperialism, and racism. Many of us were guided by a wide spectrum of anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist theorists, among them Amílcar Cabral, Malcolm X, Ché Guevara, Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Herbert Marcuse, Simone de Beauvoir, Jacques Lacan, Frantz Fanon, Antonio Gramsci, Marx and Engels, Bakunin, Lenin, Emma Goldman, Big Bill Haywood, Rosa Luxemburg, Lucy Parsons, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.

Amazingly few stories by or about left-wing sixties radicals have been told, only a handful from among the millions who were and remain political radicals. Most mainstream histories of that time have focused on the sex, drugs, and rock and roll themes of love-ins, be-ins, back-to-the-land, and mysticism. None of these explain the dismantling of legal segregation, the emergence of a women's liberation movement, or the huge demonstrations, urban uprisings, and armed actions that brought down a couple of presidents, tarnished the U.S. military machine's myth of invulnerability, and challenged the facade of democracy in the United States. The fact is that it was a revolutionary surge that opened the political space to allow for the blossoming of cultural and social creativity that couldn't be reversed, even after the political movement itself had been repressed. That was the 1960s I knew.

No one's life is typical, much less representative, but mine may be less so than most '60s radicals, because I grew up poor, female, and part-Indian in a rural southwest community. I often found myself at odds not only with the ruling class but also with the Left itself; often I felt I was regarded as feral in the movement, especially in the women's liberation movement, which I helped to found. But the similarities of our experiences on the Left are greater than the differences: Most of the political activists I knew in that volatile period experienced, as I did, government repression, blacklisting, betrayals, and painful disappointments, but remain committed to social change and justice.

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In respect of their privacy, I have changed the names of many of the people in this book, except for those who are well known or have told their own life stories. However, there are no composite characters or invented situations.

I appreciate Jean-Louis Brachet, Rob Albritton, and Martin Legassick for keeping my letters and making them available to me. Others, especially Chude Allen, David Barkham, Cathy Cade, Dana Densmore, Darlene Fife, Mary Howell, Elizabeth Martínez, and Lawrence Weiss, as well as those who kept my letters, shared their memories that sometimes conflicted with my own, reminding me not always to trust my first recall but to probe more deeply, and with humility.

Many comrades and colleagues read versions of the book over the decade I was working on it. Ellen Dubois, Elizabeth Martínez, Simon Ortiz, and Mark Rudd read early versions and encouraged me. Sam Green, Chris Crass, and others of the younger generation read later versions and their enthusiasm for the project inspired me. Karen Wald's keen eye and vast knowledge of the Cuban Revolution helped me with the chapter on Cuba. I used some material from this book in my lectures for my annual women's studies course at Cal State Hayward, "Women, War, and Revolution," and the students' responses were invaluable.

Andre Codrescu published an excerpt from *Outlaw Woman* in *Exquisite Corpse*, as did Marcus Dusk in *Notes from Nowhere* and the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*. Ann Snitow and Rachel Blau DuPlessis used an excerpt in their 1998 anthology, *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation*. Christina Looper Baker and Christina Baker Kline included my daughter Michelle and me in their 1996 book, *The Conversation Begins: Mothers and Daughters Talk About Living Feminism*. I thank them all.

I started the book in 1989 in Molly Giles's weekly writing group and continued it in Diana O'Hehir's and Sheila Ballantyne's Mills College writing workshops. I am grateful to those three fine writers and to the other writers—especially the young feminists—in the workshops. During the final year of work on the book, I benefited from Wendy Earl's careful reading and critique.

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Above all, it was the support and excellent advice of poet Pamela Chude Allen, herself a founder of the women's liberation movement, that sustained me and made the book a better one.

I thank my two great feminist editors, Elaine Katzenberger and Nancy Peters, at City Lights Books, and its esteemed publisher, Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

Finally, my solitary writer's life is sustained by my daughter Michelle's unconditional love.

Prologue RED DIRT GIRL

*Utlagatus est quasi extra legem positus; caput gerit lupinum.
An outlaw is placed outside the law and [s]he bears the head of a wolf.*

—Sixth-century Anglo-Saxon law

But to live outside the law, you must be honest.

—Bob Dylan

MAGIC AND MYTH were my daily bread growing up in rural Oklahoma. It was a huge, flat world where the wind, frigid in winter and hot in summer, swept across the prairies. The "norther," as we called the winter wind, was said to cause the bronchial asthma that kept me in a sickbed for months every year of my childhood. An unrelenting cobalt blue sky stopped where the red earth began, red clay broken by swaying yellow wheat—primary colors with few hues or subtleties. I never found the landscape of my childhood in the storybooks at school, which involved enchanted forests, lagoons, and moors where creatures could lurk and where the wildlife included deer, foxes, swans, and elegant butterflies. Our wildlife was limited to coyotes, rattlesnakes, centipedes, tarantulas, wasps, and scorpions.

Both sides of my family are descended from old settler-trekkers, dating back to the Scots who served as colonists in northern Ireland after

the English conquest. Calvinists with a covenant that confirmed them as chosen people, they were convinced that it was not only their right but their duty to take any land they could as their own. The Ulster-Scots later served England, and then the United States in colonizing North America; they were the shock troops, always at the outer edges of the expansion of empire. Those who gained land and slaves stayed put, like Andrew Jackson in Cherokee country; those who did not make it moved on, forging farther into Indian country, moving westward.

By the time the Oklahoma Territory was opened for settlement in 1889—the last frontier which had originally been promised to the Indians as a permanent reservation—the settlers who streamed in and grabbed Indian land were descendants of or were themselves losers. Not only were they losers in the game of getting rich, but many of them had fought on the Confederate side in the Civil War. Some of them did not go down easily, but rather, they became outlaws. Jesse and Frank James, the Younger brothers, and Belle Starr were all former Confederate irregulars whose families had fought alongside Quantrill in the bloody Missouri-Kansas conflict that preceded the federal government's declaration of war to prevent secession of the Confederacy. Outlawing carried on into the depression era, with Bonnie and Clyde and Pretty Boy Floyd. They were losers, those outlaws, but no sad sacks. They lived life on the edge, not even trying to “succeed” or “make it” in the U.S. capitalist system, but rather, defiantly intent on disrupting it.

My paternal grandfather was a loser of another kind, felled by the political repression unleashed by the federal government during and after World War I. He had joined the Socialist Party in Missouri before moving his family in 1907 to the rural area where I was raised—Piedmont, Canadian County, Oklahoma. During the summer of 1907 my father was born, and that same summer the founders of a new socialist organization, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or Wobblies)—William “Big Bill” Haywood, Charles Moyer, and George Pettibone—were on trial, framed for murder, in Boise, Idaho. My grandfather named my father, his fifth child, after those leaders on trial: Moyer Haywood Pettibone Dunbar.

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My grandfather died before I was born, but throughout my childhood my father recounted heroic stories about him and the Wobblies. Before the crushing repression that accompanied U.S. military conscription for World War I, Oklahoma counted the largest percentage of Socialist Party members of any state, and was second only to New York in absolute numbers.

Repression in Oklahoma began with the Red Scare. In 1919, during World War I, Oklahoma's legislature passed the Criminal Syndicalism Act, making it illegal to circulate or display “subversive” printed materials. The government enlisted the Ku Klux Klan to terrorize and intimidate socialists, and my grandfather was attacked repeatedly. Finally, in 1922, he sold his farm and took his family to the Texas Rio Grande Valley. The radical Socialist Party and the IWW were destroyed, and my grandfather was never the same, his health and mind permanently damaged by the brutal Klan beatings he'd survived.

My father, who was fifteen years old at the time his family relocated to south Texas, remained in Oklahoma, and within three years he married my mother, an orphaned part-Indian girl, most likely Cherokee. They eked out a living as sharecroppers, moving frequently from farm to farm, finally settling in my father's hometown, the tiny rural hamlet of Piedmont (population 100) when I, the youngest of four children, started school. (I'd been born in San Antonio, Texas.) My father took a job delivering diesel to farmers, and my mother made money by census taking, wallpapering, taking in washing, performing foster care, selling eggs and homemade bread, and writing for the county newspapers.

We were poor, but we never went hungry since we raised our own food and my father and older brothers hunted. When I was twelve years old, my mother began working in a nearby town. Although she was a devout Baptist and active in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, she began drinking, secretly. During my junior year of high school, my last year at home, my mother's drinking spun out of control and she terrorized me nightly with violent attacks and beatings. At the end of the school year, I ran away to Oklahoma City where my brothers and sister lived, enrolled in trade school, and went to work full time.

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The Communist Party had emerged in the United States in the wake of the Russian Revolution, and in 1938 the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was created to rout them out. J. Edgar Hoover and his FBI were busy tracking communists and fellow travelers, and in early 1941, the Oklahoma Communist Party bookstore and homes of CP members were raided and trashed, followed by trials under the Criminal Syndicalism Act. Some brave souls remained in Oklahoma, working clandestinely in the party, though most communists fled the state.

My father and mother and all my relatives, my schoolteachers, all the townspeople—everyone in my universe—were fiercely anti-communist. When I was growing up, one billboard at the edge of Oklahoma City read, "All Socialism Is Bad." Another screamed "Impeach Earl Warren," announcing that the U.S. Supreme Court was communist. This movement gathered momentum after the Supreme Court's 1954 desegregation decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. School integration was considered communist, and the White Citizen's Council never slept; among the unsolicited materials I received from them was a document that argued that the Metropolitan Opera (which I listened to on the radio every Saturday) was communist. This assertion derived from the fact that some of the performers were black. I realized then that the definition of "reds" had transmogrified from the rebellious workers of my grandfather's generation to anyone who opposed white supremacy and racial segregation.

When I enrolled at Oklahoma University for the 1956-1957 terms, I found myself inside the gates of what the Oklahoma red-hunters called a "hotbed of communists." Right away, I found the few leftist dissidents on campus. The first was my dormitory housemother, who had come from a Wobbly family and was a lesbian. Then I met Jimmy, my future husband, an engineering student who had switched his major from architecture the year before when his idol and teacher, Bruce Goff—the most brilliant student of Frank Lloyd Wright—was fired for being gay. One of Jimmy's best friends was a Palestinian refugee. A number of engineering students at Oklahoma University were from Middle Eastern coun-

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tries, including Saïd Abu-Lughod, whose family had fled to Jordan following the 1948 war that established the state of Israel in Palestine.

Saïd made me aware of U.S. foreign policy. It was the time of the Suez Canal Crisis when Egypt's President Nasser nationalized the canal in defiance of Britain and the United States. Meanwhile, in the United States the Dulles brothers, John Foster as secretary of state and Alan as CIA director, were fomenting military coups and bringing down elected governments in Guatemala and Iran.

As I learned about these events and many other things about world politics from my radical and foreign friends, I began to understand the meaning of the term *imperialism*. Saïd gave me a newly published book by a Jewish scholar, Alfred M. Lilienthal, *What Price Israel?* and other books and pamphlets about the stateless Palestinian refugees. Supporting Israel was a popular cause in the United States across the political spectrum, from liberal Eleanor Roosevelt to conservative President Eisenhower. Even the fundamentalist Protestants interpreted the establishment of the state of Israel as the realization of prophecies from the Bible's *Book of Revelation*.

Trying to understand the political situation in the Middle East led to my first experience in deconstructing the mainstream media, particularly the influential *Time* magazine. Since I was hearing and reading a point of view that was diametrically opposed to what was published in *Time*, I learned to read between the lines and to analyze the sources in order to detect the distortions and lies.

Like many others in the United States, South Africa came into my field of vision when I read *Cry the Beloved Country*, Alan Paton's best-selling novel. That heartbreaking story of the misery and pain caused and perpetuated by racial segregation—*apartheid* as it was called in South Africa—mirrored the agony of the racism in the United States that I was becoming increasingly aware of through news about the southern civil rights movement.

But more than that, the novel seemed to reflect the place and people from which I came, as few things from outside my small world did: an

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arid land of red soil and wind and windmills; rural poverty; racial segregation; native "homelands" like U.S. Indian reservations. *Cry the Beloved Country*, although about a place halfway around the world, seemed to portray rural western Oklahoma. My Scots-Irish ancestors, the "original" frontier settlers, were brethren of the Dutch Boers and French Huguenots in seventeenth-century southern Africa: settlers on stolen land, a situation that requires myths and lies portraying heroic pioneers, fending off the local savages until the new arrivals finally dominate the land and the people through brutally enforced segregation. Fear of degrading the "superior" white race did not prevent race mixing, producing Coloureds in South Africa, and half-breeds in the United States, my mother one of them.

Reading *Cry the Beloved Country* may have been the first time I caught an objective glimpse of myself, my family, and the land we cherished and considered ours (although we were sharecroppers, my paternal grandparents had owned land). I began to understand that we were settlers on stolen land, with the native people separate and invisible, that realization dawning against the distant drum of the civil rights movement coming ever closer to home. Yet it was not a sense of guilt I felt; how could I, a dirt-poor half-breed myself, feel guilty in any terms not proscribed by the Baptist preacher? What I felt instead was a sense of enormous responsibility, and that felt liberating, made me feel in control of my destiny, made me feel I could change the world and make a better place for people like me to live in, liberation of the damned as Frantz Fanon put it.

Jimmy and I married at the end of my first year at Oklahoma University. We moved into one of the houses on his father's property northeast of Oklahoma City where his father and stepmother and three of his older sisters and their families all lived. I quit school and worked full time while Jimmy completed his degree, but we maintained relations with the socialists, beatniks, and foreigners who clustered around the University of Oklahoma. They included a Cuban who was studying at the university while the Cuban revolution was moving toward victory. We celebrated

with him on New Year's Day, 1959, when Fidel Castro and the rebel army marched into Havana and took charge, overthrowing the U.S.-supported Batista dictatorship. For a brief period, until the Cubans nationalized U.S. companies and sent the foreign Catholic priests home, it was not considered controversial to support the Cuban Revolution.

I continued to support the Cuban Revolution after the United States began its attempt to crush it. With the influence of my new foreign and bohemian friends and that of Jimmy's uncle Bob, I had been inoculated against the anti-communist virus. Uncle Bob had a Ph.D. in agricultural economics and had been a university professor before and during World War II. When the United Nations was established, he worked as an adviser for the U.N. economic development program in Afghanistan. During the McCarthy witchhunt to eradicate "communists" in the early fifties, Uncle Bob, like Owen Lattimore and many others linked with the U.S. Department of State, was fired from his post and blacklisted as a communist sympathizer. Uncle Bob explained to me that the objective of the U.N. development program had been to assist in creating food self-sufficiency for millions who were starving while their land was dominated by large, mostly foreign, operators raising cash crops for the market, including opium poppies in Afghanistan. Food self-sufficiency was considered communist.

My interest in the United Nations led me to pay attention to the African liberation movements that were making headlines and being broadcast on the television news. I watched in awe as Kwame Nkrumah, the "father of African liberation," arrived at the United Nations wearing a flowing African garment. Soon, twenty newly independent African nations were members of the U.N. Vera Michaels Dean's 1957 book, *The Nature of the Non-Western World*, became my bible as I learned about the colonization of Africa and the process of "decolonization" that had been mandated by the establishment of the U.N., which recognized the inevitability of peoples' liberation movements like those that had already ignited in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. And as I read I realized that just as with the Middle East, the U.S. press distorted the reality of the African liberation movements.

I left Oklahoma for good in 1960, at the age of twenty-one. I have learned from working with refugees, migrant workers, and immigrants that each emigrational situation is governed by push and pull factors. Sometimes these factors are economic, often they are political. For some migrants they are personal, and there may be cultural and social aspects of the decision to move to a foreign land. Some have little choice but to flee under the threat of death. For me, leaving Oklahoma was necessary for the survival of my sanity; white supremacy and Christian fundamentalism pushed me out. I desperately needed to escape from a cauldron of hatred and meanness that would have to be mitigated by forces more powerful than my constant anger.

I was raised to believe that whites were superior. My mother, who was visibly part Native American, was fanatical about raising her children with the advantages of whiteness. My Scots-Irish father regarded white supremacy as a self-evident biological fact. During my childhood, I never heard a single voice speak out against racism, nor did I hear one kind word about African Americans. I was uncomfortable with the racism directed against blacks from a young age, probably because I had dark skin, darker than anyone in my family. When my oldest brother was a teenager and I was six or seven years old, he and his buddies nicknamed me "nigger baby." I hated my dark skin and prayed for it to turn light, for my eyes to become blue and my hair golden. Instead, I was skinny, dark-skinned, asthmatic, and often bedridden. As a lonely outsider, the youngest child, I was estranged from my own family, who regarded me as a damaged runt. Then when I was around twelve years old, round pools of milk white appeared on my dark skin, starting on my face and fingers, and eventually spreading over my entire body. The condition is known as vitiligo, a cosmetic dermatological defect. By middle age, my natural pigment had disappeared entirely.

I had never met a black person until my last year of high school in Oklahoma City. The year I arrived as a senior, 1955, was the first year of public school integration, and Central High School was the first integrated public school in Oklahoma. Confronted for the first time with

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actual acts of violence by whites against blacks, strong anti-racist feelings erupted from a place inside me that I could not identify, nor could I articulate the rage I felt in cogent arguments. I knew little of the fledgling civil rights movement rumbling through the Deep South, next door in Arkansas, and even in Oklahoma City, but I sent what money I could to the Urban League in response to their newspaper ad.

That year at Central High School, none of the white students nor the all-white teachers or administrators ever spoke or acted against racism to my knowledge. Not until I was at Oklahoma University the next year did I find a few white people who opposed racism. Then I too began speaking out, and my anger grew to the point that I was desperate to go as far away as possible in order to breathe and to think clearly. Racism was the push factor behind my escape from Oklahoma to San Francisco, California.

The pull factor was the lure of San Francisco, with its jazz and blues in smoky clubs, Beat poetry and folk music in crowded coffee houses. Such places appeared but never lasted long in Norman and Oklahoma City. I wanted out of Oklahoma, never to return.

In 1960, my husband and I, a young Okie couple, followed the mother road to California like so many Okies before us. From our point of view, we were abandoning the rural South and the West for the sophisticated urban United States. I stayed in San Francisco for only three years, and spent the rest of the '60s roaming North America, including Mexico. During that time, as my life became more and more defined by the 1960s' radical politics and activities, I would search for a home to replace the one I had rejected. My first choice, San Francisco, proved correct in the end, but it took a decade of rootlessness to return to it. When I did, I had a new understanding, and I no longer thought of San Francisco as the anti-thesis of what I'd left behind, a site of permanent exile. I now regarded the place as a convenient outpost of the Southwest, inexorably linked to Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Mexico too. In that sense, I had gone home again.

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I
SAN FRANCISCO CHRYSALIS

ON NEW YEAR'S Day, 1960, my husband and I packed our 1958 Volvo coupe with everything we owned and aimed west on Route 66, headed for a new life together in the promised land, the paradise of every Okie's dream.

As we left the frozen red ground of Oklahoma, I said a silent prayer, really a declaration, to a god I barely believed in anymore: Lord, I will never return to this godforsaken state. I am free. I have escaped.

I was twenty-one years old and had lived all my life in two counties in Oklahoma, sixteen of those years in rural isolation. I had never been east of the Mississippi nor flown in an airplane. Jimmy was twenty-three, and far worldlier. His father was a construction superintendent who had moved the whole family to different job locations throughout Jimmy's childhood. The family had spent two years in each of several surrounding states, and Jimmy changed schools six times. His family, like most affluent Oklahoma families, took vacations to the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and Carlsbad Caverns. Unlike me, Jimmy found it easy to talk to strangers and make new friends; I envied his self-confidence. He seemed to know exactly who he was, where he had come from, and

where he was going, whereas I didn't have a clue. I was eager to follow him to his chosen destination rather than founder in my own uncertainty.

These disparities set us up for failure. Four years later, after I left him, Jimmy would accuse me of using him and his family, saying that since I didn't have the guts to leave Oklahoma on my own, I had pressured him to move us to California while plotting to abandon him once I was in a secure position. Sometimes I think I remember telling myself just that as we sped westward down the blacktop into the frigid quiet dawn of the new year. Perhaps my intentions were not relevant, for the fact is that I did leave him when I felt more confident, when I had a college degree and my own friends.

When I applied for the fall 1960 semester at the University of California, Berkeley, I had the naive idea that all state universities were interconnected, and that my year at Oklahoma University automatically assured my acceptance at Berkeley. Instead, the admissions officer tossed the transcript back across his desk, curled his lip, and pronounced: "This counts for nothing here." Then he told me that I needed five courses in science and math and four in foreign language to even apply to Berkeley. I reconciled myself to San Francisco State College, and got a job until school began. I was hired as an order clerk at Remington Rand, and for seven months I rode the cable car downtown and filled out sales forms all day. From my perch on a mezzanine above the vast sales floor, I could see the spooky, futuristic Univac, the huge mainframe computer that they claimed would eliminate the kind of work I was doing in a few years. I felt a rumbling of fear and insecurity.

In California in the early 1960s, being an Oklahoman still carried a stigma. Negative memories and stereotypes about the Dust Bowl Okie migrants still circulated in the Golden State. John Steinbeck was still alive; his novel *The Grapes of Wrath* and the subsequent John Ford movie promulgated a populist mythology about depression-era migrants to California who were dubbed "Okies," no matter what southwestern or midwestern state they hailed from. But most Californians regarded Okies as dirty, shifty, lazy, violent, and ignorant. Upon discovering my

Oklahoma roots, some people considered it a compliment to tell me that I did not look or act like an Okie. When Jimmy, who was prouder than I was to be from Oklahoma, was given that "compliment," he defended Oklahoma. I was mortified, however, and would try to change the subject. I worked hard to lose my accent. Only recent immigrants from faraway places had no prejudice against Okies or Oklahoma, and I felt most comfortable with them.

Others I met in San Francisco were immersed in the folk music revival and knew Oklahoma as the home of Woody Guthrie. But some of these same people noticed that my accent resembled despised racists they had heard speak on television. They seemed uncomfortable with my direct experience of rural poverty inasmuch as they were accustomed to regarding the poor as "the other," so I felt a strange alienation whenever Woody's name came up. And no one seemed to know anything about the Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies) in Oklahoma, both of which were central to my sense of identity and an aspect of my heritage that I wanted to nurture. Not even Jimmy understood that about me.

Those first four years in San Francisco were not bad years, but I have no nostalgia for them. When I now drive or walk around the city, or cross the Golden Gate Bridge to Sausalito where we lived for a year, I remember the past, but the memory is neutral, as cold as a history book that contains only facts and dates and a few old pictures. And yet, I know that those four years were formative and decisive. Wherever I was headed — and I had no idea where that might be — I didn't want to turn back. It is difficult to extract from those years the seminal threads of my political radicalism and hard-core feminism, but perhaps it is analogous to the way the butterfly remembers the caterpillar.

When I arrived in San Francisco, I was already opposed to the death penalty, but opposition to it became central to my values with the execution of Caryl Chessman. Chessman was called "The Red-Light Bandit" because he allegedly cornered his hapless rape victims by pretending to

be a policeman. He was not charged with murder; his death penalty was based on the Lindbergh law, which deemed kidnapping punishable by death. Chesman claimed innocence to the end, and after eight failed appeals, he awaited the decision of liberal Democrat governor Edmund "Pat" Brown.

In prison awaiting appeals in the late 1950s, Chesman had written his autobiography, *Cell 2455, Death Row*. The book became a best-seller and galvanized a movement that continued after his execution, eventually leading to the temporary abolishment of the death penalty. A round-the-clock vigil at San Quentin prison, where Chesman was incarcerated and would be executed, dominated local television news and newspapers. I was absorbed in the issue, although it never occurred to me that I could join the vigil. I had witnessed only two demonstrations in my life: a sit-in to integrate Katz Drugstore coffee shop in Oklahoma City in the mid-'50s, and a Ban the Bomb protest by a small group of older women hovering under umbrellas in a downpour and holding wet and sagging placards. I assumed that such events required an invitation to join in.

A few months after we settled into our new life in San Francisco, during one of my daily walks to the library I came upon a scene that I could not comprehend. Directly across the plaza that divided the library from city hall, I witnessed what first appeared to be human bodies gyrating and screaming while suspended in midair. Dozens of other bodies were sprawled on the sidewalk in front of city hall. Cautiously moving closer, I could see that powerful water torrents from fire hoses were holding the bodies in midair, until they crashed to the steps below. I realized I was probably witnessing a horrible, historic event. The evening news confirmed my suspicion. The House Un-American Activities Committee had convened at city hall to investigate local activists' possible communist connections, and a crowd of people, many of them Berkeley students who had also led protests against the Chesman execution, had gathered to disrupt the HUAC meeting. Their demonstration succeeded and HUAC tucked tail and fled San Francisco.

At San Francisco State College, I began to rub shoulders with some of

the brave youth who challenged the death penalty and government repression. The campus radicals were preparing to participate in the Mississippi Freedom Rides, a national student project organized by the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), one of the largest civil rights groups. They set up a recruitment table in front of the cafeteria.

I passed the recruitment table often and on purpose, each time determined to stop. But I didn't know what to say and surely I could not even consider joining the group. Jimmy would be against it and, in any case, it seemed like an exclusive club to which I could never belong. I thought perhaps I could volunteer to support the cause by typing or answering phones, but I was afraid of rejection. I longed to know those people.

One day I mustered my courage and approached the table. Three students were engrossed in conversation. I stood there, feeling invisible, embarrassed.

"Excuse me, are you-all going to be talking to poor whites down there?"

I was surprised at the sound of my own voice, and even more surprised at the words that came out. The question had crossed my mind, but it was not the question I had intended to ask. The conversation stopped, and my words echoed back at me. I was self-conscious and aware of my Jackie Kennedy-imitation appearance and of the twang in my speech. They stared at me for what seemed like a long time. Then one of the guys said, "No, and we ain't recruitin' 'em either." They resumed their conversation and ignored me. I walked to the rest room in a daze, and once alone inside the stall, sobbed.

Soon after that incident I made a new friend on campus, Frank, who confided in me that he had been a heroin addict but now had been clean for a year. At fifteen, he had run away from an alcoholic and abusive father and a life of poverty in Utah, only to end up a hopeless addict in the San Francisco Tenderloin. Then he met his wife and began trying to quit. I often visited them at their small apartment near the campus. Frank was a serious jazz fan. He had built his own music system from components and had a large collection of reel-to-reel jazz tapes he played for

me. Frank was radical in his thinking but contemptuous of the radicals on campus who he said were elitists from wealthy families.

From Frank I learned for the first time about the wartime relocation of Japanese Americans, and questioned how I got to age twenty-two without ever having heard of it. He said that when the Roosevelt administration ordered the internment of all U.S. citizens of Japanese descent, a man named Dillon Meyer was appointed to establish and administer the concentration camps. After the war, when Congress decided that Native American communal landholding was communistic, Meyer was put in charge of relocating Indians to urban areas and revoking their reservation status, a policy eerily but officially called "termination."

One day, Frank's wife left him and took their child back to her family's home in Utah, and then he did not appear for classes. After he had been absent for a week, I tried to call him but his home phone was disconnected. Some time later, I read in the paper that a skid row residence hotel had burned down, that someone smoking in bed had started the fire, and that someone had died. It was Frank.

I befriended another troubled loner, a fellow student in one of my classes. Hendrik was from a working-class Dutch immigrant family, and he too talked about the terrible deeds of big business and banks. One day he invited me to a meeting of a new student club that gathered weekly on campus and some evenings off campus. There were only a half dozen or so young, white men at the meeting and they seemed surprised that Hendrik had brought a woman into the group. They talked about the importance of the State, and I thought they had been reading Hegel. I attended three meetings before I figured out what they were about, when the leader unwrapped and displayed a souvenir Iron Cross and a swastika. Then I realized that it was not Hegel, but rather *Mein Kampf* that formed their thinking. I fled the room and avoided Hendrik after that.

Another chance encounter changed me permanently. One day in the cafeteria at San Francisco State, a young black man handed me a flyer advertising a lecture that afternoon by Malcolm X, whom I had never heard of. He introduced himself as Art and asked if he could sit down.

Sure, I said, pleased to be invited. He explained that Malcolm was not well known on the West Coast but was the chief public representative of the Nation of Islam, more popularly known as "Black Muslims," which was headed by Elijah Mohammed. I cut my class and went to the lecture.

I was unprepared for the emotional effect that Malcolm X, and the setting itself, would have on me. The lecture was held in an ordinary fifty-seat classroom that was packed with people pouring into the hallway and sitting in the windowsills and on the floor. More than half of the audience was black; many were not students but residents of the San Francisco and Oakland black communities. I squeezed into a space on the windowsill close to the front of the room. The white students in attendance were the campus radicals.

Malcolm X entered, flanked by two bodyguards who stayed very close to him. All three men were dressed like undertakers in dark suits, crisp white dress shirts, black bow ties, and shiny black oxfords. Malcolm X was much older than I expected; he was a decade older than me. At first, he seemed like a pastor, and I expected him to speak about god. But Malcolm did not talk about god at all. What he said changed my worldview.

Malcolm pointed out that many well-meaning Americans believed in integration and that many had even risked their lives for that cause. He agreed that segregation laws should be struck down. However, he challenged the idea of integration through racial mixture, which would dilute blackness until Africans no longer existed as such. Malcolm called such a process "genocide," and claimed that the American system wanted to get rid of Africans by melting them down. He said that Africans were here to stay, and to exist as a people and a nation, not as separate individuals taking their place in the American melting pot and giving themselves over to the American dream, a dream that he said was in truth a nightmare. He said that Africans in the United States would determine their own future and would do so "by any means necessary." He said that the European was a blue-eyed white devil bent on destroying the African nation and that the African people would fight to the death to defend their right to be a people and to live as a nation.

He spoke for an hour with no notes and few gestures in a modulated voice that was never raised in anger. He ended his speech and immediately left the room with a bodyguard in front and behind him. The students filed out, speaking quietly among themselves.

I sat on the windowsill almost in a daze. The message was different from anything I'd ever heard. As I walked out of the building, the campus was clogged with thousands of students rushing to and from classes. Now I noticed the black faces in the sea of white ones. And when I saw a black face, I understood that that person was not a black-skinned white person. I understood also that my own dark skin did not make me a part of that people and their history, and that the answer to white supremacy was not integration. I knew that segregation as practice and law had to end, but now I believed that black self-determination was the key to overcoming white supremacy.

I spent little time on campus and made no lasting friends there during the first two years. Domestic life swallowed my time, and my only close friend was a burden. Liz, who was from New Zealand and the wife of Jimmy's coworker, briefly became my closest friend. When I met her, she was only nineteen years old and a high school dropout, but she was smart, outspoken, well read, and opinionated. She proclaimed her anti-colonial, anti-U.S.-imperialism and anti-capitalist attitudes with a confidence I envied. But Liz was also troubled and was eventually confined to the University of California Langley-Porter psychiatric hospital, diagnosed as schizophrenic after several suicide attempts.

The first suicide try I knew about came after she became pregnant; she slashed her wrists and almost died. Because her life was endangered by the pregnancy, she was permitted to have a legal therapeutic abortion. At that time, abortion was illegal in all the states. Tens of thousands of poor women died every year from back-alley or self-inflicted abortions, whereas girls and women who could afford it traveled to other countries to have the simple medical procedure performed by a real doctor. Most women who risked their lives for often-botched abortions already had a

brood of children and could not even afford to care for the ones they had. After several years of irresponsible testing with huge doses of estrogen on Puerto Rican women who paid with their lives lost to breast, uterine, and cervical cancers, the birth control pill was just undergoing approval (at a much lower dosage) in the United States.

I visited Liz in the hospital's maternity ward the day after the abortion. She was extremely agitated, demanding to be moved, screaming, "Why are they punishing me?" I stopped seeing Liz after a while because I was afraid of her. She said she regarded me as "the perfect little wife," and that her husband wanted her to be one. Once she threatened to kill me, saying that being around me drove her crazy because she could not be like me.

Delusional or not, Liz was right about me. I did everything that women were supposed to do and I did it without question. I did the marketing and cooked the meals, afterward washing the dishes. I entertained my husband's dinner guests whenever he asked. Weekly, I hauled the dirty laundry to the Laundromat and I ironed, swept, vacuumed, and scrubbed. I managed all of our expenses, doling out an allowance to Jimmy. I regarded my duties as a badge of honor that defined my character as "a good woman." But finally I began to see myself as Liz saw me, and I didn't like what I saw.

At first, I didn't rebel against domestic duties, but I did balk at Jimmy's complaints about my devotion to my studies. He had never complained about the time I had spent at work earning our income for three years while he went to school, but now he was anxious to get on with "real life" with me at home as a housewife, mother, and social organizer just as his mother and his sisters had been. That had never been my goal, but in the absence of a personal or professional goal, it did seem an inevitable outcome. I tried not to think about it, and I simply relished every lecture, course, book, and discussion.

Jimmy tolerated my studies because he had made a commitment when he persuaded me to marry him and to work to support him instead of continuing college. He had promised that if I did that, he would send me to school and I would not have to work. He was a man

who stood by his promises, but he picked at me and made fun of me for my ambitions. It was familiar behavior because it was how my father treated my mother, how my older brother treated his wife, and how most men I knew treated women once they had secured them as wives and mothers of "their" children.

I became as furtive and secretive as my mother had been with my father. And I despised the reflection of myself in Jimmy's eyes—the pure, vulnerable, wounded girl he had re-created as a fine housewife and mother, a wife he could show off to his friends as a good cook and hostess. He had the habit of calling home on his lunch hour, expecting me to be there. He also demanded that I wash and iron his white shirts, which I hated, and he was hurt and sullen when I suggested sending them to the laundry. He said he wanted a part of me with him all day at work, to know that my hands had lovingly handled the shirt that was next to his skin. He picked out all of my clothes and shoes.

As a child of an alcoholic, I had developed survival skills that included a large capacity for keeping the peace and going numb. But after three semesters, I began to think seriously about my future, and I made up my mind to leave Jimmy after I graduated. I would continue to perform all my duties, including sex, but I would take huge course loads and go to summer school in order to graduate at the end of 1962, only a year away. Two months later, I missed my period.

I went through the pregnancy as if it wasn't happening. Jimmy was ecstatic and began treating me like a queen—bringing me gifts and flowers, offering to help me as if I were fragile, not insisting on sex. He had taken up golf, and was, as always, passionate about football. These diversions used to bore me, but now I encouraged them, as his absence allowed me to read or go to the library. I enrolled in six courses that spring semester and four more in summer school. I found a San Francisco flat that would take children, and we moved to the inner Richmond District, a staid, mostly Russian and eastern European neighborhood. I grew to enjoy the Russian bakeries, restaurants, shops, and the unfamiliar sounds of Yiddish, Russian, and Hungarian tongues.

My due date was mid-October, right in the middle of the fall semester, so I enrolled in three night courses. Now I would not be able to graduate until spring semester, and then only if I took six courses. I was wound up like a coiled snake of pure will, for which I paid with constant migraines, which were made worse by my chain-smoking. I was so thin that few people ever knew I was pregnant. Michelle was born on a Saturday night, October 20, 1962, about thirty hours before President Kennedy announced that the United States and USSR were facing off with threats of nuclear war. Soviet missile silos had been detected in Cuba by U.S. spy planes, and a Soviet ship containing nuclear missiles was headed for Cuba. I was still in the hospital immobilized by pain medicine and a catheter due to deep tearing during delivery. I was unable to nurse. I lay terrified in that hospital bed for the week of the crisis, certain that the world would explode at any moment. It seemed absurd to bring life into such a world, and so unfair to the newborn who would grow up in terror of annihilation.

Yet, lying there helpless during the Cuban missile crisis, the threat of nuclear war came into perspective for me. Throughout my childhood and youth, and up to that point, I had been terrified of the bomb. The absurdity of trying to survive a nuclear attack came home to me in that hospital room. One day during that terrible time, my thinking changed and I found my fear had evaporated; I decided I would not try to escape, but rather would stay and help others and die fighting rather than running scared.

Fall of 1962 was a more miserable time than usual for me. I was bedridden for weeks with fever due to a nasty infection from the deep incision made in my birth canal. One of Jimmy's sisters came from Oklahoma to tend the baby, but she did nothing but read mystery novels and argue with Jimmy about sibling rivalries that predated me. I hadn't felt so miserable and hopeless since I was trapped with my violent, drunken mother during my last year at home.

Michelle was no problem at all, sleeping most of the time. When it became clear that I couldn't handle everything and that my sister-in-law wouldn't help, I contracted a diaper and formula service that dropped off

clean cloth diapers and sterilized bottles of formula daily and picked up the used ones. My sister-in-law criticized me for being a spendthrift, a variation on her long-held belief that I was a "low-class gold digger."

Just before Thanksgiving, I took Michelle to her six-week examination. The doctor stopped cooing when he got to Michelle's head. He excused himself and returned with his three medical partners, each of them taking turns at poking Michelle's writhing head. My doctor gave me a huge, weighty book opened to a page and said, "Read this," and they all left the room. The page had drawings of skulls and the text was titled "craniostinosis." I read with growing horror that it is a congenital defect in which the skull is sealed solid in a newborn baby. Lacking a fontanel, or "soft spot," the brain could not grow. If left uncorrected, the head and face would be horribly deformed, and at worst, severe brain damage or even death could occur. There were tables of statistics indicating the chances of various hideous things to come.

By that point, I couldn't comprehend the numbers. I calmly closed the book, put on my coat, gathered Michelle in her blanket, and walked to the door. The doctor returned. He was upbeat, assuring me that it was a "cosmetic" issue and, after calming me, got on the telephone and made an appointment for that evening with a pediatric neurosurgeon at the University of California medical school in San Francisco.

For once, I looked forward to Jimmy coming home, but I didn't prepare dinner as usual. I sat waiting in the dark with my coat on, ready to go to the hospital the minute he arrived. I desperately needed someone with whom to share the pain and the burden of the knowledge I carried. But Jimmy fell apart, sobbing hysterically when I told him. I tried to comfort him, but he pushed me away and called me a "cold bitch without feelings." "Why are you so calm, why aren't you crying?" he snarled, with hatred in his eyes. We drove in silence across Golden Gate Park to the hospital on the hill and found the neurosurgeon's office. The halls were empty and dim. I felt alone and afraid; there was no one in the world I could turn to. I had no contact with anyone in my family, I was an unwanted outsider in Jimmy's family, and I had no close friends.

The doctor got right to the point. Without surgery Michelle would die or be severely retarded, and some damage might have already occurred. He explained that the surgery would take nine hours and Michelle would have to wait until she was at least six months old to survive the anesthetic, and even at that age, her chances of survival would be fifty-fifty. He said he would not operate until then and that meanwhile brain damage would probably occur. Until the surgery, the skull would have to be protected from the slightest blow because it was like an eggshell. He ended by telling us there were a dozen "butchers" in San Francisco who would perform the surgery immediately. I asked how much the surgery would cost and he said I should call his secretary tomorrow to find out.

The three of us—the doctor, Jimmy, and I—stood by the examining table looking down at Michelle, who was squirming and cooing. Suddenly I felt my knees weaken and the room started spinning. When I came around, I was stretched out on the examining table. I felt a sticky wetness and smelled the metallic odor of blood. I was hemorrhaging. In the car driving home, Jimmy broke the silence, saying: "You sure do pick the time, don't you? This was about your baby, but you just had to be the center of attention. And how could you ask about money at a time like this?"

When I called the medical secretary the next day, she named the price: \$70,000, an amount of money I couldn't even imagine. I called our health insurance company and was given the bad news that infants weren't covered for their first three months of life, that any condition diagnosed during that time was considered congenital. I was desperate until my next-door neighbor whose child was disabled told me about a California state program called Crippled Children's Insurance that covered the costs for uninsured congenital defects. I made an appointment, filled out the forms, and within an hour, the surgery was covered. We would have to pay the state \$50 a month for one year. We would never have to see or pay doctors' or hospital bills, and the coverage extended until Michelle's eighteenth birthday.

Jimmy was furious when I told him the good news. "All you think about is money, money, money. My child deserves better than welfare," but

he did not suggest how we might pay for it ourselves. Yet nothing about the process felt like "welfare." The bureaucrats were friendly and helpful, and I was made to feel my child was entitled to the care she needed. That program saved Michelle's life (and it was one of the first cut by Ronald Reagan when he became California governor four years later).

Christmas season 1962 was dreary. I was a zombie, efficiently carrying out tasks at home while completing my courses. Jimmy and I spoke only when necessary, and it was usually about Michelle. For Christmas, we drove to Del Webb's Sun City in Arizona, a rich peoples' retirement community in the desert, to spend the holiday with an elderly retired couple who were friends of Jimmy's family. To me, Sun City was a nightmarish place full of rich white people waiting to die. Jimmy's Christmas gift to me was a plaid wool skirt. It was my size, but when I put it on it felt to my ankles. I was thin and anemic, and at age twenty-four, I already felt old and worn-out.

Beginning in January, I had to take Michelle to the hospital every day of the week for tests and exams. During the twice-weekly skull x-rays, I was draped in a heavy lead cape, holding Michelle as still as possible while she screeched and squirmed. The radiologists were trying to get a perfect picture, which was nearly impossible with an infant's skull because of the constant movement. In the hospital waiting room, I escaped by reading books about the sea: *The Bounty Trilogy*, *The Cruel Sea*, *Moby-Dick*, *The Sea Around Us*, *Typhoon*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, *Two Years Before the Mast*. I lived and waited in a watery grave.

The neurosurgeon decided to operate in late January when Michelle was three months old, as he felt that she was strong and weighed enough. The surgery was successful, and there were no signs of brain damage. She stayed in the infant ward for two weeks, and I spent most of my time with her. Jimmy would drop by and visit after work and sometimes we would eat supper in silence in the hospital cafeteria.

I enrolled in six history courses so that I could graduate in the spring. I hired a licensed pediatric nurse to care for Michelle for several weeks, and then found a wonderful neighborhood day care center where she could stay while I was in school.

When I first entered San Francisco State, I had two semesters' credit from Oklahoma University, but I didn't declare a major right away because I had to take certain courses to fulfill entrance requirements. Lower-division courses were crowded, and I never got my first course or time choice, so I ended up studying divergent topics such as economic geography, historical geology, abnormal psychology, astronomy, and physical anthropology. I took an introductory logic class to satisfy my math requirement and was surprised at how much I liked it. I received high grades on all my exams but a C in the course. That perplexed me, but I decided nevertheless that philosophy was going to be my major. To me, philosophy meant being able to further study Hegel, Heidegger, and Sartre. I enrolled in the introduction to philosophy course the next semester and again received a C.

Then I took a course in world history and found what I had been looking for. I changed my major to history. The course covered European imperialism, beginning with Spanish colonization of the Western Hemisphere and continuing through contemporary U.S. imperialism. Our textbook was *Imperialism and World Politics*, published in 1926 by Parker Thomas Moon, a book that so profoundly affected me that it is the only textbook from my university years that I still keep.

I enrolled in a night course, "Marxism in Theory and Practice," taught by a Stanford graduate student in history who claimed to be a descendant of the Romanov tsardom. He was vehemently anti-Marxist, and the class discussions were heated because a number of pro-Marxist students had enrolled in the course in order to disrupt it. It was my first exposure to Marxist theory, and it inspired me to take courses in international relations, in a program established by Marshall Windmiller, who had a reputation for radicalism. By that time, I had developed my politics to the point where I found the international relations students, professors, and course materials too mild and liberal, not radical or questioning enough, as evidenced by their reluctance to confront Zionism and the Palestinian question.

Increasingly, my life was spent in classrooms or in the library, reading, researching, and writing papers. Practically every course required a long

paper. A pattern emerged in my choice of topics that has remained central to my scholarly and activist work, a theme I later named after Marxist-Leninist theory, "the national question." The national question, in my context, refers to relations between distinct peoples, usually but not always numerical minorities, but always without representation in the governments that claim sovereignty over them. A Yugoslav professor from the Republic of Macedonia taught my course in modern European history. For him, European history centered on the history of the Balkans, so the national question was preeminent. In other courses, I researched and wrote papers on the Mongols in Russia and the Soviet Union, the Basques in Spain, the Kurds in Iraq, Iran, and Syria, and ethnic groups in Central Asia and Africa. I also wrote papers on the Maori in New Zealand who were of interest to me because they shared a history with Native Americans. Like them, they had been reduced to impoverishment and dependency and missionized by Christians, their languages and cultures denigrated.

During my last semester at San Francisco State, in the spring of 1963, I became a member of a small group of history students led by a brilliant mentor. For us, Marxist theory was obviously the best theoretical/analytical approach to history. Our mentor, Vartan Gregorian, was a freshly minted Stanford Ph.D. whose seminar on the French Revolution brought together the five of us senior history majors. We met as a study group in addition to the scheduled class time. The meetings always took place in my flat so we could be with Michelle, who loved the attention.

There was one other woman in the group, Irene, the child of Greek immigrant parents who had grown up in East Chicago, Indiana. She was radical and fiercely proworker; she would become one of the first members of the DuBois Club—the youth branch of the Communist Party U.S.A.—when it was founded in June 1964 in San Francisco. I'd never met a woman my age who was totally self-supporting and determinedly single and independent. At times, she lived in a run-down residence hotel and worked as a housekeeper; other times she was a live-in maid and baby-sitter. She refused to work in offices or factories, fearing she might

end up in the blue-collar dead-end of most girls from her community, or married with children. In order to supplement her meager income, Irene went to the horse races and she always won something. She did not have a clear career goal; she just wanted to continue to learn and to be free. I shared those goals, as did others in our existentially inclined group.

Irene adored Michelle, and we took her everywhere, sometimes even to classes. Irene was a devoted and knowledgeable film buff. Rarely a day passed that she did not take in a movie, and on weekends sometimes two or three. She also read film history and caught whatever revivals came around. She took me with her to movies once or twice a week, wanting to teach me how to watch and "get" New Wave films. We viewed the works of Italian directors Fellini, Antonioni, and Passolini, French directors Resnais, Vadim, Truffaut, and Goddard, from Japan, Kurosawa, Satyajit Ray from India, and also older European filmmakers such as Clouzot, Buñuel, Dali, Lang, Eisenstein. Some of the films struck me as tedious and boring, but after each one, Irene would provide interpretations that made me want to watch it again. When I did, often I could see what she was talking about, but just as often, I did not get her point. It took a while before I understood that I too could interpret and then argue with her, something she did not encourage.

The exercise of watching art films was intellectual and technical, but rarely did a film touch me emotionally as fiction and poetry did. There was one exception: Antonioni's *Red Desert* featured a housewife whose marriage matched the toxic industrial landscape of the Italian city where it was set. My identification with the character validated my own unhappiness, re-creating it as art instead of dull reality.

Whenever I try to reconstruct how I gained the will to leave Jimmy, I remember the turning point. "The Click," as it came to be called in the women's liberation movement, happened during Memorial Day weekend 1963 on Jimmy's twenty-sixth birthday.

Although Jimmy and I were unhappy and estranged, I had resigned myself to the prison of marriage, at least until Michelle was grown, but I

had insisted on certain things: that we live in San Francisco or some other big city; that we refrain from buying property or accumulating furniture; that I would go to graduate school and become a university professor; that I would buy an electric typewriter; and that I would send out the laundry and ironing. I didn't verbalize these demands, but Jimmy was increasingly lazy and if I insisted I could usually have anything I wanted as long as I balanced the checkbook, had breakfast and dinner on the table, and was there when he came home in the evening.

That day, as we drove down the central California coast, it occurred to me that he was like a child, that most men wanted to remain children with mamas caring for them. The thought disgusted me, and I tried not to think about the ordeal of being physically intimate with a man who disgusted me and who had contempt for me. With the pregnancy, Michelle's surgery, and working to graduate, I had had ample excuses to avoid him. Now those excuses were running out and I faced an unwanted future as a wife to a man I disliked.

We were on our way to visit Josh and Betty, a couple we had met soon after arriving in San Francisco. Josh had been a draftsman working with Jimmy, but he had quit and moved to San Luis Obispo to study architecture at the California Polytechnic Institute. He was a second-generation member of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), and although I agreed with most of their political views, their manner of presenting them was condescending and self-righteous. They reminded me of the Baptist preachers and missionaries of my childhood. There was another female guest that weekend, Josh's childhood friend who was now an architect in New York City, a rare woman in that profession. She was statuesque with silky blonde hair and golden, tanned skin. She wore a small, tight black dress and stiletto heels, her tanned legs bare. I felt like a frumpy housewife and mother, especially when Jimmy fell all over himself flirting, trying to get her attention. I was furious that he admired a woman who was just the opposite of what he expected of me, and my fury resulted in a glimmer of insight: I was property to him; he didn't want me to be independent and thereby attractive to other men.

The next day Betty and I and her mother-in-law packed picnic baskets, and we all piled into two cars and headed for Avila Beach. Jimmy, Josh, and the blonde architect rented a dune buggy and sped around the dunes while Betty and her father-in-law took a walk along the beach. I stayed behind perched on a sand dune with Josh's mother, struggling to keep an umbrella from going airborne while holding Michelle and trying to screen her from the sun and sand. I felt awkward with Josh's mother because I didn't know what to talk with her about and I didn't want to be sermonized. She pointed out the offshore oil rigs and complained about their pollution. I was taken aback because coming from Oklahoma I had never regarded oil in a negative way. I took it for granted as something inherently good and desirable.

"Have you read this book, Roxie?" she asked.

I stared at the fat, dog-eared paperback she extended to me. The cover was bright yellow and was decorated with a barely visible nude woman. It was *The Second Sex* by the French existentialist, Simone de Beauvoir.

"What is it about?" I asked.

"The oppression of women. Take it, I finished it. I think you might like it," she said.

Indeed, the oppression of women, and by my favorite novelist. I began reading. I read while walking back to the car, I read by the tiny bedside lamp late into the night, I woke up and began reading. I finished the book as we were driving back to San Francisco, and I lifted my eyes from the pages to a different world. For several days thereafter, I mechanically carried out my chores while repeating the theses of *The Second Sex*: Femininity is neither natural nor innate, rather it is a condition of socialization that is based on, but not determined by, physiological differences. Male domination must then be explained by historical factors; in particular, the rise of private property and the state. A woman is created, not born. Dependency is the curse of woman.

One sentence in particular became my mantra: *Woman escapes complete dependency to the degree in which she escapes from the family*. The institutions of male domination and supremacy would have to be destroyed, including that most basic unit, the patriarchal family, in order for women to be

free. My immediate response to these revelations was not to leave my marriage, but to immerse myself in the study of history, the economics of history, and the origins of private property and the state. But I would soon leave and I was preparing myself to do so.

That was in the spring of 1963. I know now that other awakenings were in the air, and even in the press before and after I read *The Second Sex*, but I was not aware of them. I didn't know that President Kennedy had made a campaign promise to establish a Commission on the Status of Women and had honored the promise, nor was I aware of the report of the commission. Even though I was an avid reader, I had not noticed Betty Friedan's prescient book, *The Feminine Mystique*, on the best-seller list that very summer of 1963. Hegel's *zeitgeist* was revealing itself, and later in the women's liberation movement I would meet and talk with thousands of women who were going through their own personal awakenings at exactly the same time.

After graduation that spring, our young professor took a position out of the state, we all graduated, and the group disbanded. I was accepted to the University of California at Berkeley's history Ph.D. program, but I had to pass a German reading examination and so my summer was consumed by studying German. I kept Michelle at home with me while I studied. I was confident and happy, certain in my newfound freedom from my husband. I knew I would leave him but wanted to wait until I was settled in graduate school. Things didn't work out as smoothly as I planned. Instead, I fell into another undesirable relationship.

A member of the history study group, Omar was from Pakistan and was several years older than the rest of us. His primary goal was to extend his student visa as long as possible. He had come to the United States in the late 1950s and as soon as he could, he made his way to San Francisco and enrolled at the state college. He seemed to have arranged with professors to audit courses without ever graduating. He made a living by telemarketing aluminium siding to hapless widows and, as I was to find out later, by dealing drugs.

I continued to hear from Omar after the end of our study group, and, in the fall, we began a clandestine affair, known only to Irene, who was horrified because she considered Omar a pretentious hustler. Omar always wore slacks, a dress shirt and tie, and a slightly shabby tweed jacket. He smoked a pipe and spoke with an exaggerated Oxford accent. People often assumed he had studied at Oxford, and he never tried to disabuse them of that. Omar claimed to know famous people, among them Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali), Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis. He read extensively and introduced me to the works of Herbert Marcuse and William Burroughs. Omar was excited about the LSD experiments of two Harvard psychologists, Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert (later Ram Dass), and about the drug culture in general. I was not aware for several months that Omar was a drug dealer. He had a roommate who was from India, and the two of them worked together supplying customers all over the Bay Area. One day I finally realized that Omar knew so many rich and famous people because he was their connection.

When I began my affair with Omar I was still living with Jimmy, so we would meet at Omar's apartment in the Tenderloin, with Irene covering for me by saying I was visiting her. I had never been inside a building in that sleazy twelve-block district frequented by johns seeking prostitutes and people wanting to score drugs, and I was actually afraid of the Tenderloin because of something that had happened soon after I moved to San Francisco.

One night Jimmy and I had been walking home to our apartment on Hyde Street in the dip between Russian Hill and Nob Hill, only a few blocks from the invisible line that marked the beginning of the Tenderloin, when I was attacked by a drunk woman. I had been, as usual for me then, dressed up in the Jackie Kennedy style of the time. Suddenly, someone was pounding my back and I heard a woman's voice yelling, "You fucking bitch, you think you're something don't you, fancy lady?" A middle-aged street person reeking of alcohol grabbed my perfectly coiffed bubble hairdo and dragged me to the ground. Jimmy stood and stared, unable to move. When the woman's male companion dragged her

off me, I got up and started running, Jimmy chasing after me. I was sobbing when he grabbed me. He said, "She was low-life and doesn't even deserve to walk on the same street as you." But for an instant, I had caught sight of my reflection in that woman's eyes: I too would hate that person she saw. I was terrified and depressed for days, obsessing on the thought that the woman reminded me of my mother, how she looked and smelled and behaved the last time I had seen her in public, when I'd acted as if I didn't know her. I had managed to suppress the memories of her drunken attacks during my last year at home alone with her, but they returned after the incident. That week had ended with a monstrous migraine that allowed me to focus on the pain rather than on the past.

So now, it felt exhilarating to walk fearlessly through the Tenderloin, either alone or with Omar, my long hair loose and flying. I no longer feared drunken women who reminded me of my mother. This freedom from the past reinforced my determination to leave what I had begun to call my "Doll House," after Ibsen.

In the fall of 1963, I found myself fulfilling a dream—I was a doctoral student in history at the University of California, Berkeley. The history department was one of the top-rated departments in the country, along with Harvard and Princeton, neither of which admitted women. The department boasted many world-famous, excessively paid, tenured historians who were all white males. If there were other female doctoral students or any persons of color, I never met them.

At that time, the field of history was one of the most exclusive and rarefied of the old boys' clubs in the country. Academic historians regarded themselves as the keepers of the secrets and the guardians of the official versions of history that they created. In the more traditional history departments, the field was still dominated by the heritage of nineteenth-century German historicism, or "scientific" history. Historicism, which began as a reaction to the French enlightenment, proposed the use of reason and universalist theories.

It was precisely this waning theory of history that attracted me. German historicists were interested in the internal workings of periods and social

entities, as well as the challenge of reconstructing a person, society, or time exactly as it was originally. German historicism originated with Hegel, whose thinking inspired and informed every German intellectual from the conservative Leopold von Ranke to future communists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Historicism relied on the monograph, an intensive study based entirely on written documents cobbled into a narrative without interpretations, theories, or conclusions; "The documents speak for themselves" was the catchphrase. The historian's mandate was to "tell it as it actually was," in the words of von Ranke. By some unexplained alchemy, the universal would be revealed through the collection of particulars.

Although I was familiar with and enamored of German historicism, I panicked when I attended my first seminar on nineteenth-century German social history and the distinguished professor, Hans Rosenberg, began speaking in German. I had passed the German reading exam that was required for entrance to the doctoral program, but I had no training or experience with oral German. Fortunately, the professor eventually spoke in heavily accented but erudite English, and I learned every detail of the social and economic life of a specific portion of Prussia during a particular period.

My other course was with Professor Raymond Sontag in European intellectual history, focusing on Luther and Calvin and the rise of Protestantism, the Enlightenment, and readings in Rousseau, Voltaire, and Diderot—all the antitheses of German historicism. The historicists sought underlying economic relations to understand a social order, whereas positivists of the Enlightenment tradition, like Sontag, tended to credit "great men" as the decisive factors.

This rarefied intellectual world was my small paradise for a brief period, as it was completely unrelated to my uncomfortable daily life or the world around me. I might have become lost in it had personal and historical events not intervened.

In early October, when I finally insisted that Jimmy move out, it never occurred to me that I would ever be separated from Michelle. Jimmy took a room in a residence hotel in downtown San Francisco, and for the

three months that I was a single mother, he visited Michelle every evening after work, disrupting my life considerably. But he still supported us and felt he had the right to be there and I didn't feel empowered to insist otherwise. I encouraged him to see Michelle on weekends, but he preferred the ski slopes. After a few weeks I was frustrated with the pattern and proposed that we trade places; that he live in the apartment and I would live downtown and see Michelle on the weekends. Perhaps this challenge would not have been acted on, perhaps we might even have reconciled, but on November 22, 1963, the world fell apart.

It was a cold and gray day. I usually dropped Michelle at day care near the flat, but that day she had a cold so Irene stayed with her. I commuted to Berkeley with a business graduate student and walked across campus to California Hall, a large lecture theater. I loved the pomp and ceremony of Professor Sontag's class. He always entered majestically and held us spellbound for an hour.

It was 10:45, fifteen minutes before class, and there were only a few students scattered around the hall. I pulled out the morning *San Francisco Chronicle*; on the front page was a picture of Jack and Jackie Kennedy and a news item about their visit to Texas. The caption under the picture said that the Kennedys, Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson, and Texas governor John Connally would ride in an open-car motorcade through Dallas at noon Dallas time. I studied my watch and calculated that it was nearly 1 P.M. in Dallas. Something flashed in my head, and I heard my own voice say aloud, to no one in particular: "He should not be in Dallas."

The hall was filling. Suddenly someone slammed through the giant copper doors and yelled, "Kennedy's been shot in Dallas." The few seconds of silence that followed was like the vacuum before an Oklahoma tornado. I jumped up and ran from the classroom, through crowds of students standing as if they were trying to remember what it was they were going to do. I was the only person on the move; my destination was the bank of pay phones in the student union. I called my own number collect. Irene, who was baby-sitting Michelle, answered and accepted the call.

"Is Michelle all right?" I asked, nearly breathless.

"Of course, she's fine, sleeping. What's wrong, Roxie?"

"You haven't heard," I said.

"Hear what?" I visualized Irene sitting at my desk. Beside the telephone sat a small radio.

"Turn the radio on," I said.

"What's wrong with you anyway, Roxie?"

"Just turn the radio on." I heard the words: *John F. Kennedy is dead; the thirty-fifth president of the United States has been assassinated*. The words were repeated over and over. Then came Irene's scream, like a movie sound effect. More words from the radio said that Kennedy was shot at 12:30 P.M. Central Standard Time and was pronounced dead at 1 P.M. The assassin was at large and a manhunt was under way.

Irene and I talked for an hour, with the radio blaring in the background. The student union, usually packed with students, was empty. I wondered if there had been an evacuation, if there had been word of nuclear weapons being launched.

Classes were dismissed and I had four hours to wait for my ride to San Francisco. I wandered down wet, dirty Telegraph Avenue, which was eerily empty of cars, bikes, and pedestrians. Shops had closed and some of them had black wreaths hanging on their doors. The Mediterranean Café ("The Med") was open and appeared almost normal, though not as busy as usual. There was no line at the espresso machine. I ordered a latte and a huge slice of chocolate torte. I still had the sandwich I had brought for lunch but I wanted caffeine and chocolate. I devoured the rich cake in three bites while I waited for the latte. I took the steamy glass to the table at the window, a table I had never before seen available. I stared out the window, empty of thought or emotion.

Just before 3 P.M., I walked to the entrance of the campus and there was my ride waiting for me. "Have you been here long? I didn't know where to find you," I said.

"That's okay. We were celebrating with champagne over in the business school." I said nothing. We drove the nearly empty Bay Bridge in silence. When I arrived home, Jimmy and Irene were sitting silently at the kitchen

Then a voice boomed out of the shroud of mourning, saying that the chickens had come home to roost. It was Malcolm X.

Jimmy and I traded places in mid-December. His studio was in a turn-of-the-century brick building on Bush Street on the south slope of Nob Hill, where the Hyde and Bay Street cable cars rumbled and creaked up Powell Street to the summit. It was like being in a strange and magical city, the San Francisco I had imagined back in Oklahoma, the San Francisco of the movie *Vertigo*. My brief sojourn there gave me a taste of autonomy I would pursue forever after. I had never slept in a place by myself, nor had a room of my own. In the studio, I laid out my books and papers, my typewriter, and I planned to read incessantly.

My dream world crumbled on the second morning when I answered a knock on the door and opened it to find the maid, who seemed quite surprised. When she asked if the gentleman was in, I told her that I was his wife, that we were separated and that I was going to live in the studio in his place. She hurried away, mumbling something about gentlemen. Soon the manager called, explaining that the residence hotel was for gentlemen only. My newfound appreciation for the solitary life had to be indulged, so I found another studio on the seedy side of Nob Hill, on the edge of the Tenderloin. The place was much cheaper and very shabby and cockroach infested, but I was determined to become independent of Jimmy, to get a job and live alone.

I moved into the apartment on the first day of December. The next morning I walked up Hyde Street, passing the apartment where Jimmy and I had lived during our first year in San Francisco. I had been so naive, so eager to learn from Jimmy at that point. I was truly a different person now. When we left Oklahoma together, Jimmy and I had dreamed of exploring the larger world together, remaining in our own safe cocoon, protected from but stimulated by the world outside. But I had stepped out of the cocoon and begun living a secret life. I had made friends on my own, meeting them at work, and at school, listened to Beat poets read on campus, and to Malcolm X speak. I couldn't tell Jimmy about such things, and we had drifted apart.

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Michelle in her high chair was also curiously silent. Jimmy's eyes were swollen, red. "The guys at work cheered when they heard the news. I walked out. I don't want to go back." Somehow, the celebrations by many and Irene wanted to spend the night; I agreed, but announced that I was going out. I took the bus to Omar's apartment in the Tenderloin. We walked together silently until we reached a restaurant in Chinatown, stopping only to buy the evening paper. The headline screamed assassination news, but what interested Omar was a small article at the bottom of the front page: "Tribal War in the Congo, Kinshasa Independence Supported by White House."

Omar said, "See this? It's more important than the assassination of one imperialist. Now he gets his own medicine."

I ran into the restaurant bathroom and threw up until I was dehydrated and weak, my chest heaving. I sat on the toilet sobbing with my head in my hands, my whole body shaking uncontrollably. Finally I went upstairs where Omar sat reading the paper, two big bowls of steaming egg flower soup and tea on the table. We ate in silence. Afterward, walking the few blocks to City Lights Bookstore, I said, "I know you're right." Omar wrapped me in his arms and held me and said, "I apologize for being so harsh. Remember, I'm not an American."

I could not understand my emotions. I had lost all faith in Kennedy and the U.S. government with the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba two years before the assassination. I knew Kennedy was a cold warrior like the rest of them. But it was as if the world had fallen apart. At the same time, I was finally realizing that a wall divided me from Jimmy and an ocean divided me from Omar.

The following days were hazy, as if the world had stopped. It seemed that everyone was running in place, as if under electrical shock we were riveted to the television, jolted by fits of terror and disbelief as the accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was gunned down by Jack Ruby. Watching the funeral, it seemed that all Americans were in synch, marching together to the heartbeat of a vague and indefinable sorrow.

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I walked another block to snaking Lombard Street and sat on the steps among the hydrangeas. Then it struck me: What have I just done? I have left my daughter behind. When I moved out, Jimmy told me that I was a stranger to him, that my bad blood and my breeding was taking over just as his sisters had warned him it would. And I had believed him, because I felt there was a force inside me making me act against my will. He claimed his only concern was for Michelle, that she not grow up to be like me. And again, I thought that he was probably right. Runs in the family. Watch out or you'll turn out just like your mother, crazy, drunken Indian. Only the pure, patriarchal genes of my father and Jimmy could possibly outweigh the evil. Jimmy had said, "You can do what you want. You are a lost soul. But how can you drag Michelle along?" Indeed, how could I?

"So what is the answer?" I wailed at Jimmy. "What, what can I do?"

He waited patiently, playing Socrates, waiting for me to answer my own question. I could see in his face that I had finally asked the right question, and then I became calm and clear. Of course, there was only one way. He wanted me to disappear, as if I had died. He was not a man of violence, nor would he ever risk extreme punishment. Soft at the center, there was contempt in his eyes, hate in his words and sneers. I detested the man with whom I had lived for six years, whom I had relied on to save me from myself and from my past, from my bad blood and bad manners, and from my class. And he *had* remolded me, so that I no longer knew who I was. But I knew I didn't like the little housewife I had become. A small voice from somewhere within me was begging to be heard. I knew I had to trust that voice and to go wherever it might lead me.

After I had been living in my fifth-floor walk-up on the edge of the Tenderloin for only a few days, Omar and his roommate were mysteriously evicted from their apartment. He appeared at my door, asking to spend the night until he could find another place. He ended up living there. But as it happened, I kept that place for only one month, during which I was in Los Angeles most of the time. I took a ride along with Omar and his Beat poet friend, Winston, in a car Winston was returning

to Los Angeles, and what was supposed to be a quick trip turned into a long journey, with six of us crowded into the vehicle.

Winston was Omar's best friend, and the three of us spent a lot of time together. I had first met Winston at a party. A big blond man in a plaid shirt with jeans held up by leather suspenders, cowboy boots, and a cowboy hat was sitting in the center of a group of adoring fans reading his poetry aloud. After he finished and the group was breaking up, Omar introduced me: "Roxie, this is Winston." Winston dramatically fell to his knees, formed his hands into a prayer position, and bellowed, "Roxanne, Roxanne, light of my life." I was confused, embarrassed, and shocked. That was the first time I'd heard of Cyrano de Bergerac. Even though my real name was Roxie, I was "Roxanne" forever after.

I was the only woman on the trip to Los Angeles. We drove down the coastal highway, turning an eight-hour drive into a twenty-hour trip. We made long stops on moonlit beaches, spent hours at Nepenthe watching the whales migrating south, and drank hot cider at the Big Sur Inn. It was my first experience of being with people stoned on marijuana, though I didn't indulge. The first time I had tried smoking it, a migraine headache knocked me out for days. Now I wouldn't touch the stuff.

Once in Los Angeles, Omar and I stayed with a friend of his in the basement of an artists' collective on the beach in Venice, which was then a cheap, run-down town. They called themselves pop artists in the Warhol style of using consumer items as material. Old billboards and neon signs littered the yard and the basement where we were put up. We had planned to stay overnight and take a bus back to San Francisco before Christmas, so I hadn't even brought a change of clothes. But days went by, including Christmas, which we spent in a down-and-out local bar. I had only been to Los Angeles once, with Jimmy to visit his aunt who lived downtown. Reflexively, I claimed to hate L.A., but hanging out with artists and poets in Venice and making forays into other parts of the city, especially the Mexican district in East Los Angeles, I realized that it was a cool place. It was certainly the largest city I had ever visited.

I walked alone on the beach, thinking. I felt burdened by the relation-

ship with Omar, I knew I needed to be alone, not in another relationship. But every time I tried to talk about these feelings, he charmed and dis-tracted me and I let it go. Returning after one of my walks, I found him and one of the women artists in the basement making out. I was furious; not jealous, but disgusted. I returned to San Francisco on a Greyhound bus.

Winston was already back home when I arrived, and he told me he was moving to a larger place and asked if I wanted to take his apartment. I loved Winston's two-room-plus-deck small paradise on Sacramento at Polk, at the foot of Russian Hill and well out of the Tenderloin. He had lived there for a decade and had fixed it up over time. The walls were knotty pine, lined with built-in bookcases and the floors broad pine planks. And it was cheaper than the lousy room I was renting.

But there was a condition. He said, "I'll give it to you if you'll promise me you won't let Omar move in with you. He's my best friend but he's not good for you."

I agreed, but Omar was a hustler, after all, and he talked his way back in, even getting Winston's approval. Perhaps I could have withstood his charm had I not been very sick with what turned out to be pneumonia when he returned.

I took a leave of absence from graduate school that second semester since I was too exhausted to do my best work. I settled into a kind of marginal existence. I visited Michelle at her day care several days a week and took her across the street to the park. I never allowed Omar to meet her. He spent hours on the telephone selling aluminium siding for homes, telling all kinds of lies. He worked for a man who followed up with the sale in person and paid Omar a commission. The same man—I met him only once—provided the illegal drugs that Omar sold. Although Omar had a few regular customers, he was mainly a supplier to party-givers. I began accompanying him to the parties in Pacific Heights and the Oakland Hills, and those thrown by jazz and theater groups. One day he told me that his boss also fenced stolen goods and asked me if I would like to try shoplifting to make some money. I had only \$500 saved, not a small sum at the time, but it was going fast. Even though Omar worked his criminal enterprises daily, he

didn't clear much money, and I was paying for rent and food for the both of us. There were a number of restaurants with links to his boss's syndicate where we could always feast for free, but we left huge tips for the waiters. So shoplifting seemed a better option than punching a time clock.

Omar's instructions worked like a charm: Dress well but not flashy, and never conceal the stolen item. Walk out with it in hand or under the arm because concealing items subjected one to arrest. If stopped, simply pretend to have forgotten to replace the item, hand it back, and walk out of the store fast. Above all, I was to appear self-confident, not shifty or guilty. I relied on the one experience I had had shoplifting three years earlier. In my first semester at San Francisco State, I took thirteen textbooks because I didn't have enough money to pay for them. I had been indignant that textbooks cost so much, and the used ones were already gone by the time I got through the line, standing outside in the rain, inching along for two hours. When I realized I couldn't pay for the books, I looked the security guard in the eye and walked out of the store with my arms filled with the books. I expected to be arrested and I intended to make a statement, a point about books and learning needing to be free and accessible to all, but no one stopped me. Although my life up to that time had been marked by various acts of rebellion in the name of justice, I think this was my first direct action against capitalism. It had felt good.

I took to shoplifting like a natural, and I walked out of department stores with dresses, coats, purses, jewelry, silk scarves, belts, briefcases, ties, every imaginable item. Then I graduated to more challenging items—Persian rugs, sterling silver cutlery, Tiffany lamps. Omar called me the daughter of Jean Genet—we were reading Sartre's *Saint Genet*, about the ex-convict French poet.

I gave the stolen items to Omar, who handed them over to a broker who was associated with his boss. From the supermarket, I took delicacies for us to eat and share with friends—smoked oysters and salmon, escar-got, filet mignon, and lobster. I was never stopped. I did have certain principles. I never stole from small, independent stores, and I never took anything from a private home. Once during a party in Pacific Heights, I

caught Omar going through the pockets of coats in an upstairs bedroom and I walked out. He promised never to do it again, but I'm certain he did.

I began to notice a mysterious aspect of the underworld. Its aim was to make a lot of money, and indeed a lot of money was passed around, but it did not accumulate. The hustlers I got to know were usually broke, even homeless, but always certain they were on the verge of the big take. When money was casually handled and passed around it lost meaning, as I would find out when I worked in a casino or when I met mercenaries in London. Satisfaction came from the excitement and danger, but also from the free flow—big tipping, taking cabs, gambling, buying the whole bar a drink, acting spontaneously as if rich. This experience with the underworld demystified money for me. Almost every family quarrel I had witnessed was over money or the lack of it, and this experience in the underworld allowed me to abandon my fear of financial insecurity forever.

Irene disapproved of my new lifestyle and regarded Omar as a "class leech" who fed off the working class. On the other hand, she accused me of becoming a "class traitor" at the same time she boasted of "expropriating the capitalists." She even disapproved of my choice of Marxist thinkers, namely Herbert Marcuse, who synthesized Marx and Freud into cultural studies in his *Eros and Civilization*. Beyond theory, Irene was spending a great deal of time with Jimmy and Michelle, and began pressuring me to return to them. I couldn't make her understand that I would rather die than return to the marriage.

With my shoplifting skills, I may have been one of the best-dressed and best-fed women in town, but I was not making enough money to pay the rent. I went to Remington Rand in downtown San Francisco to try to get my old job back. There were no openings, but my former supervisor referred me to the Wells Fargo Bank processing center across the street. A few hours later, I was operating an IBM check-proofing machine, just as I had done for two years at a bank in Oklahoma City. I felt a sense of regression when I realized that three years of hard work at college meant very little.

I worked the swing shift from 3 to 11 P.M., so I was able to visit Michelle at day care for a couple of hours a day before work. I took a second part-time job as a preschool teacher in a private Jewish school in the Richmond District, not far from Michelle's day care. Even though I wasn't Jewish, the principal was desperate to find someone to finish the school year as the regular teacher had died unexpectedly of a heart attack. The principal gave me copies of prayers in transliterated Hebrew to memorize and instructed me on the basic food rituals. Thus, I spent each morning with twenty-two four-year-old children who carried little trading cards with pictures of their favorite Beatles. I won their hearts because they thought I looked like a Beatle with my straight hair and bangs.

It was at this point that my life took a very different direction. I was introduced to Louis by a coworker at the bank who shared a house with him near the Castro Theater. Omar was with me the first time I met Louis, and we all went out together the first few times. Then one day Louis and I met alone, and soon thereafter, I asked Omar to leave for good. I finally had my own place.

Louis had grown up in Mexico, his mother a Mexican of Greek extraction and his father a World War II French immigrant to Mexico. His wife had recently divorced him, and he was in his last semester majoring in French at San Francisco State. We had much in common. We were the same age, born in the same month, and we had both married in our teens. His wife, a U.S. citizen who grew up in Mexico City where her father was a wealthy, expatriate businessman, had left him at exactly the same time I had left Jimmy, but they had no children.

Early in the relationship, we saw a dozen New Wave films together, and he tried and succeeded in acting and looking like Jean-Paul Belmondo in Truffaut's *Breathless*. I was his Jean Seberg. Louis swept me off my feet. Soon we would graduate to identifying with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir as lifelong companions who led separate but convergent lives. And we talked and talked. He was the most worldly and intellectual person I'd ever met.

I knew that Louis was going to spend the summer in Mexico with his

family, and I dreaded his leaving. After Mexico, he would move to Los Angeles for a teaching assistant position in the French graduate program at UCLA. He hinted that I should consider transferring to UCLA, and then he invited me to accompany him to Mexico. I talked to Jimmy, explaining my need to get away, and sublet the studio to Irene for three months.

Louis, my primary guide to Mexico, was an impatient intellectual with a dual personality. One side of him was a rather imperious French baron (he even wore a gold signet ring) who regarded Mexicans as inferior vermin that stained the breathtaking Mexican landscape. His other personality was that of a Mexican nationalist who exploded in anger and imparted harsh lectures when faced with gringo romanticism or racism toward Mexicans. The humiliating Vietnamese defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu a decade earlier, and France's more recent defeat by the Algerians troubled him, and though he harbored paternalistic and racist sentiments toward the Vietnamese and Algerians just as he did toward Mexicans, he despised colonialism. Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir were his intellectual mentors, but he was never a true leftist, nor even a liberal; he hated politics.

Louis's family, like most Europeans and North Americans in Mexico, were wealthy. His French father was a medical doctor and a painter, but his mother's wealthy family owned a blanket factory and were the only employers of the Indians in their village. Louis's maternal grandfather was a Greek rug merchant who had established the family business during the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship in the late nineteenth century. Louis's Greek uncles, their French wives, and their offspring were all racists. They were sometimes patronizing, cruel, and vulgar to "their people," and they *always* assumed a mantle of superiority under the guise of the white man's burden.

I kept looking into every face—the maids, a mother holding her new baby surrounded by a brood of children with distended stomachs and the rusty blond hair of malnutrition, the drivers, carpenters, gardeners. I studied their faces searching for signs of life, of anger, hatred, or rebellion. Their masters and mistresses insisted that the Indians were happy being

servile, that it was their nature, and that their dignity resided in their submission to a superior race. They claimed that the Indians were like children who received joy from the simplest things, that, like children, they were naturally undisciplined and pleasure seeking, and so it was essential to be firm and strict with them, sometimes even physically, otherwise they would not respect authority.

Louis told me that as a boy he'd had sexual access to the maids—who themselves were no more than fifteen years old—as did his brothers and his father. I asked what happened when they became pregnant and he said that a maid would be sent back to her village and another acquired, often from the same family.

I became lonely and alienated behind the walls of Louis's home in Mexico City, and I felt like an impostor. I knew very well that had that type of crude exploitative system existed where I grew up, that I would have been the maid, not the child of the master. As for the elite women, Louis's mother and sister, his brothers' wives and girlfriends, they seemed to possess a high level of status and authority. Supremely self-confident and spoiled, they were repulsive to me. I did not want to become one of those women.

That summer of 1964 in Mexico, I learned about colonialism firsthand. Louis represented both the colonizer and the colonized. His two personalities—the imperious French baron and the anti-imperialistic, anti-colonial Mexican—were not without internal conflict or confusion. But I, still a relatively inexperienced and unsophisticated Okie, didn't recognize either of these personalities at first. I simply found Louis enigmatic, exotic, and wildly sexy (as did every other woman who crossed his path). I came to regard him as my destiny.

At the end of the summer, I left Louis and his family and joined some U.S. students to drive to Vera Cruz. I traveled on alone through Tabasco and Yucatán, riding ferries and local buses with farm people and their children and chickens. I felt at home with the rural people; I could understand their simple Spanish and they could understand me. I didn't encounter any other foreigners on the local buses, and everywhere I went people wanted

to ask me about the Kennedy assassination or to tell me their theories. Conspiracy theories abounded in the United States, and lawyer Mark Lane had already published a book, but I had never heard the term "coup d'état" mentioned. In Spanish, it is "golpe del estado," and every Mexican I talked to believed that Lyndon Johnson and the top army generals had assassinated JFK and taken power. When I insisted that military coups didn't happen in the United States, they looked blankly into my eyes.

I traveled for two weeks, and then took a bus north to Ciudad Juárez. When I walked across the border to the El Paso Greyhound station I experienced culture shock and wanted to run back across the border. I hadn't noticed the violence in the air in the United States before, and having been free of it for six weeks, it disturbed me greatly. As I waited to catch the bus to San Francisco, I fantasized about catching other buses without knowing their destinations and about riding buses all over the continent with only my worn army duffel bag. By the time we pulled into the San Francisco Greyhound depot, my mind was made up: life with Louis was not for me. I would stay in San Francisco and continue the life I had patched together and work out a shared custody plan with Jimmy. I had a nice apartment, a job to return to, and a probable eventual research or teaching assistantship in history at Berkeley. I wasn't enthusiastic about the decision, but I knew it was the right thing to do.

Irene had stayed in my apartment while I was away. I had called her from El Paso to ask her to clear out by the time I arrived, and she'd cheerfully agreed. I wanted to have a few days with Michelle before resuming classes and work, but when I arrived and tried to unlock my door, the key wouldn't work; the lock had been changed. When Irene opened the door, I saw that the walls had been repainted and there were new curtains and strange furniture.

"Sorry, Roxie, it's mine now; you shouldn't have gone away."

Irene had actually convinced the owner that I had given her the place and had signed a one-year lease in her name.

That was the first blow.

The second blow came when I went to see Michelle. Jimmy presented me with divorce papers that gave him full custody of Michelle, based on my desertion.

"I wouldn't fight it if I were you. I have two lawyers and I have more money than you," Jimmy said.

I think I felt I deserved it. I think I felt relieved that decisions over which I had no control had been made. I think I felt free to wipe clean the slate and start over. I had done it before, when I left my rural home for the city, and again when I left Oklahoma for California. I was about to do it again.

Within a few weeks, my situation had changed completely, almost without my having thought out the decisions I was falling into. When Louis arrived from Mexico and again urged me to transfer to UCLA, I was ready to be persuaded.

II

BECOMING A SCHOLAR

IN SEPTEMBER, 1964, a few days after my twenty-sixth birthday, Louis and I moved to Los Angeles in a VW bus that broke down three times. I had transferred my graduate status from the UC Berkeley history department to UCLA. Louis already was set up with a teaching assistantship in the UCLA French department.

Arriving in L.A. at 3 A.M., we went straight to Diamond Jim's on Hollywood Boulevard for breakfast, a gaudy twenty-four-hour restaurant with red leather booths and crystal chandeliers. Louis had never been to L.A., but somehow had heard of Diamond Jim's.

After Diamond Jim's, we drove the Sunset Strip to UCLA. Westwood Village, the location of the campus, was culturally shocking. There was no hint of Hollywood glamour. On the map, it seemed that the university might be integrally connected to Hollywood, being on Sunset Boulevard only a few miles from Beverly Hills, but Westwood was a world apart. On the north side of the campus, off Sunset, were the exclusive mansions of Bel Air where the streets were privately owned and maintained, and a guarded gate stood at the entrance. On the east side of campus was sorority row and behind that, the lesser mansions of the rich

provided an unwelcoming demeanor. The dormitories were on the west side of campus along with the track field and stadium, beyond which were the gigantic Veterans' Administration hospital and military cemetery that was ghostly quiet in 1964, but two years later would be packed with the warehoused damaged living and fresh graves planted with the contents of the body bags from Vietnam.

On the south side of the campus was the precious commercial center of Westwood Village that was demarcated by Wilshire Boulevard. Skyscrapers anchored the corners of Wilshire and Westwood Boulevards, with more under construction, one with a helicopter pad on the roof. Another, a huge federal building, later proved useful as a site for anti-war demonstrations. After the skyscrapers came the increasingly working-class part of Westwood up to Santa Monica Boulevard, beyond which were even poorer neighborhoods that soon turned from white to black in South Central, which would erupt the next summer into one of the most significant events of the sixties: the Watts uprising. A few miles west, Sunset, Wilshire, and Santa Monica Boulevards dead-ended at the ocean, where most students who could afford it lived. To the east was downtown, and on the other side of that was Mexican East Los Angeles.

There was little choice where to begin looking for a place to live. Without a car, we were obligated to search for a home as close as possible to the campus. We were unprepared for the hostile attitude of landlords toward UCLA students, but by the end of the day, we had signed a one-year lease on a one-bedroom apartment. Louis accompanied the owner to transport a refrigerator for the apartment and returned looking shaken. While sitting in the back of the pickup truck with the refrigerator, he was shot at, the bullet hitting the refrigerator. That was a year before the Watts uprising, and such warning signals were not uncommon.

Like the landlords, the Westwood merchants did not cater to students. The Westwood Village that evolved into a frat and yuppie playland in the 1970s was unimaginable in 1964. Only Zack's coffee shop—one of those huge, flat-roofed twenty-four-hour establishments that were ubiquitous in Los Angeles—welcomed everyone for as long as they wanted to hang

out. Zack's was always lively, and at night pimps and hookers, drag queens, and people of various ages and descriptions who talked to themselves populated it. There was one other enclave in Westwood Village where I felt at home—Bob Klonsky's Marxist bookshop. He was an old communist who had weathered the days of postwar witch-hunting.

Louis and I soon learned that living in L.A. without a vehicle confined us to the bland world of the UCLA campus and Westwood Village. Bus companies were privately owned and expensive, and walking, which I loved, was dangerous due to a curious lack of sidewalks. Louis finally bought a car in East Los Angeles for \$100—a red and black Oldsmobile convertible. It was an ugly, oil- and gas-guzzling monster, but worth every minute of misery it caused thanks to the disturbed looks on the faces of locals when we rumbled through the streets of Westwood trailing clouds of black smoke.

Los Angeles was a country girl's dream. As a girl in rural Oklahoma I never imagined that one day I would meet or share public space with icons whose glossy photographs I had admired in *Photoplay* and *Motion Picture* magazines. Two graduate student friends were children of prominent Hollywood producers and invited us to parties in their Beverly Hills and Malibu mansions, where we met other producers, directors, and actors. One friend of ours tutored Burt Lancaster's teenage daughters and took us along to their home in Bel Air to swim in the pool and watch old Lancaster movies in the private screening room. The man himself would sometimes appear and talk to us. He even gave me a television set. "You don't have a TV? Take this one." They had one in every room. Kirk Douglas used the UCLA track field for his early-morning jogs. Steve McQueen owned the cottage next door to where I later lived in Beverly Glen Canyon, and on weekends his biker buddies roared up and down the narrow winding street for beer parties. Even the street I lived on held faded fame. Named Scenario Lane, it once had been a Hollywood movie set for westerns.

The Whisky-a-Go-Go opened on Sunset Boulevard in 1964, and featured Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young (when they were Buffalo

Springfield), Hugh Masekela, the exiled South African jazz trumpeter, and the Doors. The only competition on Sunset was Pandora's Box, where my Oklahoma compatriot Leon Russell held forth and where the first of the "underground" newspapers of the sixties, the *L.A. Free Press*, was published in the basement.

At night on Sunset Boulevard, cars were always cruising bumper-to-bumper, blasting Dylan, the Beatles, the Stones, or the Doors. The sound of tambourines drifted out of open car windows, and young freaks clogged the sidewalks, a mass of hair and painted bodies jingling Tibetan bells. They were gentle people, but the cops hated the anarchy of the music and the freedom. The LAPD clamped a 10 P.M. curfew on teenagers and began hauling long-haired white boys to the local police station for free haircuts. Police batons cracked skulls practically every night. One Saturday night during the summer of 1966, the tactical squad struck with a force so inappropriate and out of proportion that the gentle people fought back, torching police cruisers and buses. The two-week riot by the children of the privileged class was memorialized by our beloved Buffalo Springfield—"Something happening here, what it is ain't exactly clear . . ."

After that, the Sunset scene became tame and uncool; the crowds migrated east to the Troubadour and Ash Grove, and west to the Topanga Corral. The curfew was still in effect when I left L.A. in 1968.

My first academic year at UCLA, 1964-1965, was a politically troubled time. U.S. carpet-bombing of Vietnam, called Operation Rolling Thunder, marked the beginning of a tortured decade of unrelenting, merciless bombing during which more ordnance was dropped on Vietnam than in all the combined wars of the twentieth century. Then in February and March, U.S. Marines occupied the Dominican Republic to prevent a democratic election, and Malcolm X was assassinated. In the background, President Lyndon B. Johnson intoned the civil rights manifesto: "We shall overcome." LBJ said it live on national television, robbing the words of their power, for by then it was clear that civil rights would

be paid for in Vietnamese blood, with the U.S. military the principal employer of young black men.

I was particularly dismayed because I had worked hard to get LBJ elected in the fall of 1964, or rather to prevent Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona from being elected. Anticommunism, militarism, and states rights (anti-civil rights) formed Goldwater's ideology. The John Birch Society was founded by candy heir Robert Welch in 1958, with the purpose of taking over the Republican Party. Goldwater was their man, with Ronald Reagan waiting off stage. And Johnson had stated unequivocally: "I shall never send American boys to Vietnam to do the job that Asian boys should do."

I had become convinced of the "lesser evil" argument, and so I joined a Democratic Party voter registration project in the Mexican barrio of East Los Angeles and did house-to-house canvassing. As important to me and many others as the presidential election was California State Proposition 13 that sought to repeal the Rumford Fair Housing Act that prevented nonwhites from buying or renting property in white neighborhoods. When election day came, I could not bring myself to vote for president. I cast my vote against Proposition 13, but it won by a landslide, with three-quarters of white voters supporting it. I vowed never again to work on an electoral campaign. I would have to find other means of forcing the United States to change.

In between working for voter registration, I spent the first two months in L.A. getting settled and starting my new course of study specializing in Latin American history. But my living situation soon became unbearable when Louis's twenty-year-old, barbiturate-addicted brother and his silent girlfriend arrived to live with us. In the summer of 1965, I found my own place, a tiny in-law studio tucked behind a big house in Beverly Glen Canyon, and I bought my first car, a Volvo coupe. Louis rented a cottage down the street from my place and that is how we lived, apart but as a couple for the next two years.

Louis and I had different interests and friends and worked in different academic departments, so our lives intertwined only when we were both

really interested in seeing each other and doing things together. Louis's cottage was a center of gatherings, while my place was almost sacred to me in its solitude and silence. Every few weeks we would drive up the coast and visit friends and I would spend time with Michelle. Except for the usual dramas, jealousies, and bruised feelings that all couples experience, our relationship was mutually supportive and stable. But I increasingly immersed myself in radical politics with like-minded associates, which did not suit Louis. His preoccupation with Algeria and Vietnam had led me to believe that he was more politically engaged than he turned out to be.

The UCLA campus seemed to me more like a movie set than a real university, and at first, I liked that about it. Students in the film arts school, as well as Hollywood, often used the campus to shoot films. Science-fiction thrillers were shot in the futuristic skyscraper where I spent most of my time. The social sciences building, named after Ralph Bunche, was known as "the waffle" due to its framed, square windows and dark toast color. I had an office on the ninth floor where I worked as a research assistant to an emeritus professor who was too frail to leave his home. He had the right to keep his office until he died, so whoever was his lucky assistant could use the office and all of its furnishings, equipment, and telephone.

Research Assistant was my job title but the actual duties included having tea with him and his wife in their nearby home on Friday afternoons and listening to his stories about growing up on a farm in Kansas. He was my grandfather's age and, like him, had grown up in the agrarian branch of the Socialist Party. During my second year as a teaching assistant, I lost the privilege of a private office and had only a desk in a roomful of other teaching assistants, and a private research cartel the size of a walk-in closet.

Latin American history intrigued me; it was more meaningful and timely than European history. Latin America was a relatively new subfield in the history discipline, an element of a new field called Area History that included Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Interest had been spawned in

these regions by their anticolonial, nationalist revolutions in the 1950s, in Latin America specifically because of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, and because government research money had been made available.

RAND, a nonprofit organization that thrives on government contracts from the CIA and the U.S. Army, was located a few miles from UCLA in Santa Monica. During my 1964-1965 Latin American seminar, one or two RAND analysts sat in on some of our meetings. The topic was "nationalism" in Latin America, a phenomenon the U.S. government wanted to transform into a pro-U.S. force, squelching self-determination in the process. RAND, as well as the government-funded Social Sciences Research Council, promoted studies of the development of "middle sectors" in Latin America, aiming to create a broader, property-owning middle class with elected governments tied to U.S. interests. Central to this development would be strong police forces and armies to prevent workers' strikes, peasant uprisings, and student activism that could lead to socialist revolutions. Substantial sums of money were allocated for such research in all academic fields during the Kennedy administration, which initiated Alliance for Progress and the Agency for International Development (USAID).

Latin American studies at UCLA could have been renamed CIA studies, so prominent was the agency's role in the fate of hundreds of millions of mostly poor Latin Americans. By the mid-'60s, thousands of U.S. academics were cooperating with the CIA in identifying U.S. and foreign students as potential CIA agents. Hundreds more professors and graduate students were actually working directly for the CIA, recruiting, running covert operations, and writing pseudoacademic propaganda. From 1952 to 1967, the CIA funded the National Student Association. They established academic publishing houses and financed independent publishers. They also infiltrated the mainstream media with agents posing as journalists.

At UCLA, Chile was the focus of study and scholarly exchanges since that country had a republican tradition not unlike the United States and was envisaged as a beacon to the rest of Latin America. In 1964, the CIA, through USAID and the U.S. State Department of State, succeeded in

propping up their candidate by channeling tens of millions of dollars to the Eduardo Frei presidential campaign against the socialist candidate, Salvador Allende. (The ungrateful Chilean electorate responded six years later by electing Allende; a CIA-supported military coup led by Augusto Pinochet forced him out in 1973.)

I was overjoyed when John Gerassi revealed U.S. CIA interventions in Latin America, particularly the Southern Cone, in his 1965 book, *Great Fear in Latin America*. Gerassi had been a *Time* magazine correspondent in Latin America and was fired for telling the truth, including the fact that *Time* refused to publish what he sent them. He took a job teaching at San Francisco State, published the book, and went on the lecture circuit to tell the truth about the U.S. Alliance for Progress in Latin America.

Studying Latin American history put the CIA in perspective, making me aware that U.S. imperial control of Latin America far predated the founding of the CIA. The U.S. Marines had always been there for the job, singing their marching song, "From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli . . ." It was not the CIA that stole half of Mexico, nor was it the CIA that overthrew and subverted all attempts at democracy in Haiti, Cuba, and Nicaragua during the 1890s through the 1930s. The marines occupied both Haiti and Nicaragua for more than thirty years, bombing civilians. And the U.S. Marines were always there to "mop up" after CIA operations and to play a major role in the wars that resulted.

I already knew about the U.S. role in dismantling the Congo through the assassination of Lumumba and the imposition of a corrupt dictator. I also knew about its role in promoting and maintaining the apartheid regime in South Africa. However, I did not know much about U.S. policy in Asia until the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution that gave President Johnson war powers in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War was an extension of the U.S. Asian-Pacific policy that had begun with the 1949 triumph of the communists in the Chinese Revolution, during which the United States had propped up the Chinese Nationalists who based themselves in Burma on the Thai border, making permanent mercenaries and opium growers of the border peoples. In

the Philippines, the CIA operated against the communist Huk insurgency and crushed the movement temporarily in 1953, moving on to install the Catholic Diem regime in southern Vietnam, creating the artificial state of South Vietnam. The Paris agreement between the French and Ho Chi Minh's forces recognized one Vietnam and called for elections, but it was clear that Ho Chi Minh would win and the United States intervened to prevent that result by creating civil war.

By the time John Gerassi spoke at UCLA, he was also working with the Bertrand Russell Tribunal on Genocide in Vietnam and was leaving for Hanoi the following week. The tribunal was a turning point in moral consciousness about the war, at least among many intellectuals. I followed it closely and its findings and recommendations affected me profoundly. It was chaired by Jean-Paul Sartre, and its members included Simone de Beauvoir, James Baldwin, former Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas, U.S. antiwar leader David Dellinger, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) chair Stokely Carmichael, Peter Weiss, Isaac Deutscher, and other world-renowned figures. Sartre concluded the tribunal with a searing indictment of the U.S. role in Vietnam that was published under the title "On Genocide":

This racism—anti-black, anti-Asiatic, anti-Mexican—is a basic American attitude with deep historical roots and which existed, latently and overtly, well before the Vietnamese conflict. One proof of this is that the United States government refused to ratify the Genocide Convention. This doesn't mean that in 1948 the U.S. intended to exterminate a people; what it does mean—according to the statements of the U.S. Senate—is that the Convention would conflict with laws of several states; in other words, the current policymakers enjoy a free hand in Vietnam because their predecessors catered to the anti-black racism of Southern whites . . .

Until then, I had not known that only the United States and South Africa still refused to ratify the United Nations International Genocide

Convention, which had been formulated as a response to the horrors of the Holocaust. But though Sartre's eloquent statement and the conclusions of the tribunal dated the beginning of U.S. genocide to the post-World War II period, I believed that those behaviors had begun at the inception of the republic, when it struck out across the continent wiping out the Indians, stealing their lands and resources, and taking half of Mexico.

But it was Mexico that framed my developing perspective. My worldview had changed significantly during my travels in Mexico and then from El Paso to San Francisco, traversing what I would come to know as Aztlán, the stolen northern half of Mexico. I knew that the U.S. invasion of Mexico in 1846 ended with the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, transferring the north of Mexico to the United States, swallowing what were to become the U.S. states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and parts of Oklahoma, Colorado, and Utah. A question had presented itself to me on that Greyhound: Which side are you on, that of the colonizer or of the colonized? I made the choice. I chose the colonized. I chose Mexico.

Right away, I was aware that Los Angeles was at its heart a Mexican city. I learned this not from my newly acquired historical knowledge about Mexico, but rather from a fellow graduate student, Juan Gómez-Quíñones. Juan was the only Latino in my Latin American history seminar, and he was a native of East Los Angeles. He would later become a leader in the Chicano student movement that burst onto the scene in 1968, and a pioneer of the academic field of Chicano studies. But in the mid-1960s, he was hunkered down, as was I, trying to make it through graduate school with as little psychic and intellectual damage as possible. Juan and I often shared dinner in one of the small cafeterias and it was in those meetings that I learned of his suffering as a Chicano in a racist society. Up until then, I had seen racism through a black and white template.

I felt another connection with Juan—he knew all about the Industrial Workers of the World, the Wobblies. The topic for his paper in our Latin American seminar was the Mexican Revolution, and his most admired

hero of the period was Ricardo Flores Magón. Magón was a Mexican anarchist revolutionary of the same era as my Wobbly heroes. Magón spent much of his life in exile in the United States and was a friend of U.S. anarchists like Emma Goldman and the Wobblies. My interest in Magón led me to read Emma Goldman's autobiography. She told about meeting Magón in 1911:

I found California seething with discontent . . . The revolution in Mexico was the expression of a people awakened to the great economic and political wrongs in their land. The struggle inspired large numbers of militant workers in America, among them many anarchists and the I.W.W. [Industrial Workers of the World], to help their Mexican brothers across the border. Thoughtful persons on the Coast, intellectuals as well as proletarians, were imbued with the spirit behind the Mexican revolution.

Emma Goldman's autobiography contained another observation that impressed me: "However they may dislike the idea, professors are also proletarians; intellectual proletarians, to be sure, but even more dependent upon their employer than ordinary mechanics." Soon I began organizing graduate teaching assistants and professors into a faculty union.

Magón had begun his trajectory to revolution as a student leader; Juan identified with this path and so did I. The Russian Revolution and Lenin's strategy of building a worker-student alliance influenced us, and we believed we had a radical mission as students, intellectuals, and future university professors.

Yet my radicalism was making me impatient with my life as a graduate student. By the end of two semesters, I had enough course credits to take the master's degree written exams. I decided to do so and to leave the doctoral program, return to San Francisco, and teach in a junior college. But I did well on the exams and the department offered me a teaching assistantship. I agreed to stay for another year to finish the Ph.D. course work and take the doctoral qualifying exams, then return to the

Bay Area to write my dissertation. Not only did I want to be more a part of Michelle's life but I was also anxious to participate in the exploding student, Black Power, and antiwar movements, which seemed to be centered at Berkeley.

The UC Berkeley Free Speech Movement began during my first semester at UCLA in the fall of 1964, and quickly grew massive and powerful. The movement leaders had spent the summer of 1964 in rural Mississippi working for the voting project organized by SNCC. They had learned organizing skills and gained political knowledge and consciousness that they brought back to campus. When prevented from distributing civil rights literature on campus, they shut the place down. At UCLA, where nothing as dramatic was happening, we observed the Berkeley uprising with envy.

Furthermore, the Vietnam War was escalating. On July 28, 1965, President Johnson appeared on national television and announced that the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam would be increased from 75,000 to 125,000. On November 2, 1965, Norman Morrison, a Quaker protesting the war, immolated himself under Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's window, his one-year-old daughter bundled up nearby to serve as the only witness. In between those two events, on August 11, the African-American community of Watts, south of downtown Los Angeles, burst into flames. In my mind, the three traumatic events were intertwined and screamed for my attention and action.

Watts was on fire; I was ten miles away listening to the radio day and night. I wrote to Louis, who was in Mexico for the summer:

August 14, 1965. The rioting continues here. There are curfews and much fear—a tension in the air. America has not seen such an insurrection since the Wobblies. The rich people in Westwood and in the canyons are terrified that the rioting will spread. Sounds like a guilty conscience to me. I am glad to see blacks reacting violently on a mass basis. It seems all their humiliations have been channeled too long into self-destruction. They should scream loudly. Perhaps

out of embarrassment and fear, if not from pure humanity, white people's values will change. We are so observant of civil obedience. But I wonder if the trade unionists would ever have won a thing had they not taken to sabotage and violence.

Anyhow, calm in the face of injustice and underlying insanity, as you know, bugs me a great deal. While listening to the news I cannot help but feel a secret joy that blacks are ripping apart that ghetto they inhabit, and to see them symbolically spit in the face of Johnson and his self-righteous moralizing about his civil-rights bill. Somehow Johnson thinks it's great that Hungarians killed one another in the streets of Budapest, and that East Germans rebel against the injustices of the Russians, and that he is ordering the murder of Vietnamese in the name of "freedom" and "justice," but it's not all right for anyone to rebel in America because law and order are disturbed.

Watts burned for five days, leaving thirty-four African Americans dead and over a thousand wounded. Property loss amounted to \$200 million. More than 35,000 African Americans had participated in an uprising that reduced the Los Angeles Police Department (the "black and whites" as they were called in Watts) to surrender and required 10,000 National Guardsmen to quell. When it was over, it became clear that the destruction had been precisely selective, leaving churches, libraries, black businesses, and private homes untouched. The police and the white businesses, mostly liquor stores, were the only targets.

The uprising had been sparked by an incident of police brutality that was normal for Watts, unusual only in that the police did not kill anyone, but rather, simply beat a black motorist. But it was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. The uprising exposed a rage that had been building over nearly two decades of LAPD terrorism against the black inhabitants of South Central Los Angeles. That rage burst from the realm of internalized violence out into the streets, sending news bulletins to every corner of the planet, but particularly to every urban African

American in the United States. And so began what in any other country at the time would have been called a permanent state of urban guerrilla warfare.

On August 15, the day the uprising ceased, as quickly as it had begun, Reverend Martin Luther King gave his opinion to the press after viewing the devastation from behind National Guard lines; he concluded that it had been necessary to use as much police power as possible to check the rioters. He did not enter Watts, nor did any other national African-American leader. The African-American mainstream press condemned the uprising as a disgrace. During the heat of the battle, comedian and civil rights activist Dick Gregory stood on a police car and yelled through a bullhorn, calling on the people to calm down and go home. A young man shot Gregory in the leg in answer to his demand. Up until then, nonviolence had been regarded as the only acceptable form of black resistance, that is, among the liberal politicians and media and the philanthropists who bankrolled organizations like Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Conference Leadership Conference. Yet from Africa, from Latin America, and from Asia, freedom movements expressed their solidarity with the Watts "warriors and martyrs."

Watts was dubbed a "riot" by the media, changing the color of the term from white to black. Until then, the thousands of riots in twentieth-century United States had been white riots against people of color, like the Tulsa riot in 1921, when the Oklahoma National Guard (all white) joined white Tulsans in leveling the thriving black neighborhood of Greenwood and killing hundreds of residents, or the Zoot Suit Riots in 1943 Los Angeles, when white sailors on leave attacked young Chicanos.

Nearly a year after Watts, on May 7, 1966, a black-and-white patrol chased a beat-up car for fifty blocks, beginning in Watts, before the driver pulled over. An African American, Leonard Deadwyler, was the driver. He was rushing his pregnant wife to the hospital. His last words were, "She's going to have a baby," before one of the two white officers shot and killed him. Watts did not burn this time. There were people planning

far more concisely. The community was organizing for serious resistance and self-defense.

I knew something about the L.A. gangs before the Watts uprising because Juan was employed as a researcher for an interdisciplinary project to study them. After Watts, property destruction and holding off the cops were attributed to the gangs, particularly two former enemies, the Gladiators and the Slausons who had horrified the LAPD by uniting for the occasion. The event galvanized and politicized the gangs and all ganglike activity ceased for several years. Bunchy Carter of the Slausons formed the Black Panther Chapter in South Central soon after the founding of the organization in Oakland in 1966. He was murdered at a meeting on the UCLA campus a year after I left.

During the Watts uprising, I had listened to the voice of an LAPD officer on the radio and could almost place the part of Oklahoma his family had come from. Many of the young white men—some my own relatives—who had been drawn to the LAPD were sons of Dust Bowl and Defense Okies, migrants from Oklahoma and surrounding states who settled in South Central Los Angeles in towns named Bell, Bell Gardens, Gardena, Lakewood, and Compton—the site of Watts—in close proximity to the huge defense plants in which their fathers worked. Compton Junior College, a public two-year institution, was nearly all white, as was the neighborhood, during the 1950s. As the whites' lives improved, they bought homes farther south in Orange County, north in Simi Valley, and east in the San Bernardino Valley.

Then blacks who had also migrated from the southern states to work in the defense industry began moving into South Central L.A. The all-white Los Angeles Police Department recruited Okie and other southern boys, many directly from the "police science" department at Compton Junior College. Young Okies, many of them war veterans, were recruited, not only by the LAPD but also the L.A. Sheriff's Department, the Oakland Police Department, the California Highway Patrol, and even by the Hell's Angels motorcycle club. Their deeply socialized white supremacy proved a useful tool for establishing a cordon around the black

ghettos of Los Angeles and Oakland. The John Birchers grabbed the better-off Orange County Okies, whereas the police outfits, the Minutemen, and the Hell's Angels were there for the working-class fellows. Orange County became so dominated by my fellow Okies that the saying, "As Orange goes, so goes California," indicated the politics not only of California but the nation, as both Nixon and Reagan rode that white horse to the White House.

As the identity of the cops and neofascists in southern California became clear to me, I felt deeply ashamed and filled with hatred for Okies and for myself. Then I met a white South African exile, and for the first time I understood more about my own history, as well as the history of the United States.

In my second year at UCLA, I read in the local newspaper about a young man, a white South African in exile, protesting in front of the South African Tourist Bureau in Beverly Hills. At that time, white-ruled South Africa with its big-game parks and Indian Ocean beaches, wine country charm, wholesale diamonds and gold from local mines, and colonial safety and luxury for white people was a fashionable destination for the jaded wealthy of Beverly Hills and Coldwater Canyon. Martin Legassick, a graduate student in history at UCLA who I didn't know was staging a ninety-hour hunger strike to protest the ninety-day detentions of South African anti-apartheid activists, a detention that could be renewed after a day of the detainee's freedom, so that the time served without charges, under intense deprivation, interrogation, and torture, would go on for years. Another purpose of Martin's action was to expose the ugly truth behind the South African travel posters featuring safaris and surf. The people who shopped in Beverly Hills were the ones who vacationed in South Africa.

In an interview with the *Los Angeles Free Press*, Martin mentioned a group he was forming on campus to oppose apartheid and the U.S. government's friendly relations with the racist South African regime. I went to the group's next meeting, and thus began my relationship with the struggle against apartheid. Martin named the UCLA group South

African Solidarity Action Campaign (SASAC). It was the first time I had ever joined a political group. There were fewer than a dozen of us—in addition to Martin and me, there were a white South African couple that lived in Los Angeles, two black South African graduate students, and several other U.S. citizens from the L.A. community and UCLA campus. Martin became an important teacher and friend, and his knowledge of South African history and reality illuminated the foundations of white supremacy in the United States for me.

South Africa's apartheid system was based on the establishment of *Bantustans*—isolated and impoverished tribal reservations. After World War II, when the white population elected the Boer-controlled National Party in the face of inevitable African decolonization, they sought to transform the indigenous African majority into clusters of quasi-independent homelands. Their blueprint for this social experiment was the nineteenth-century Native American reservation system established in the United States to accomplish the same goal. I had thought that the Bantustans were like southern slave plantations, but learned from Martin that the private character of the plantation was different from the public institutionalization of the Bantustans. However, both the slave plantation and the Bantustan guaranteed a cheap and controlled labor supply. The "pass laws" legislated by the apartheid regime prohibited travel outside the Bantustans, so a mostly male migrant labor force was restricted to company barracks. In addition to this massive control and internal colonization of the African population, the apartheid regime maintained strict segregation nearly identical to that of the pre-civil rights, Jim Crow U.S. South.

Martin regarded the Boers as puppets of the larger capitalist interest and the imperialist powers. When I asked if he believed that the Boer population would ever turn against apartheid, he asked me if I thought the descendants of the Puritans and the Ulster-Scots in the United States would ever give up their racism and aggression. What Martin told me about Boer history, particularly their self-identity as "indigenous" to South African soil, reminded me of my forefathers, the Calvinist frontier settlers of the United States.

My migrant ancestors had moved west into Indian country, battling and displacing Native American farmers. Though most of them ended up poor and disempowered, Okies and other descendants of the migrations do not think of themselves that way, nor is that the image that dominates the popular imagination. They believe they are the true native-born, the personification of what the United States is supposed to be. From their perceived ancestor, Daniel Boone, to Steinbeck's fictional Tom Joad, they believe they are "pure men" who are the victims of bankers and other slick operators, surrounded by red, brown, black, and Jewish enemies, whom they believe have hijacked their beloved country.

Meeting Martin and other foreign leftists also offered an outsider perspective from which to understand and analyze the U.S. Left. Since my first contacts with socialist-inclined activists in California, I had heard a mantra about the good old days when Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt were friends of the poor and dispossessed in the midst of the desperation and desolation of the Great Depression. Nearly every intellectual, artist, musician, and movie star in California at that time was a fellow traveler. Upton Sinclair nearly became governor, and the Okie cotton pickers nearly won the cotton strike. They waxed nostalgic about the 1930s, the same decade when a general strike shut down San Francisco, vigilantes attacked union organizers in the Central Valley, and the Red Squad hunted communists in Los Angeles.

Dorothy Healey, a 1930s communist union organizer of the migrant workers and head of the southern California region of the Communist Party for two decades, including the four years I lived in L.A., recounted the 1938 cotton strike and celebrated the militancy and solidarity of the Okie cotton pickers, hardly mentioning that the strike was lost, or that two decades later, the children of the pickers were serving as L.A. police officers or were active in the John Birch Society. Furthermore, Dorothy and other Communist Party people perceived the 1930s Okie migrants as responsive to the Communist Party.

I was perplexed by this attitude on the part of people I admired, and I was disturbed that this romanticized moment was seen as the template

for revolution in the United States. In part, I was confused because my father had always said that Roosevelt "got the eastern bankers and other rich people back on their feet" (restored collapsing capitalism through government investment) and drove the small farmers off the land. The facts supported my father's views. Government farm subsidies to not grow crops in order to raise prices did not benefit the small farmer, but enriched large operators who bought tractors and other farm equipment with the cash and evicted sharecroppers, tenants, and pickers. Small farmers who could not afford mechanization saw their holdings reduced to the point of bankruptcy under the New Deal agricultural plan, and the banks profited and recovered through foreclosures. Hundreds of thousands of Oklahomas and Arkansans, including my father, were forced off the land and had to migrate to California or stay and work for the WPA, which my father did, at \$25 a month.

I thought the U.S. Communist Party was stuck in the glory days of Communist Party "Americanism" and union organizing. Reading leftist writers from the 1930s, I was struck by how out of touch with the history of the United States they were, not only about white workers but also about white supremacy. In the populist and Left narratives of the '30s, economic oppression and common cause were supposed to erase white supremacy, and although by the 1960s the Left had long since abandoned the Okies as an organizable group, it continued to seek a progressive white base. There was a widespread assumption that white workers' sense of racial superiority was a manifestation of "false consciousness" that could be eradicated by common struggle. But white supremacy as a form of nationalism was backed by the largest imperial economy and military in human history, no small cause for "pride." And even though the forces openly advocating white supremacy were marginal, their message was identical to the government's official patriotic rhetoric.

During my time in Los Angeles, I came to realize that my people—"Okies"—are the latter-day carriers of the national origin myth, a matrix of stories that justify conquest and settlement, transforming the white settlers into an indigenous people who believe they are the true

natives of the continent. My new understanding undermined my sense of identity and my pride in my grandfather's socialism. I vowed then and there to reveal to poor white Americans how they had been used as cannon fodder for imperialism, stooges for capitalism, and unpaid (and paid) cops to repress African Americans and Mexicans.

As I began to think of myself as a revolutionary, I believed that I should join a disciplined organization, and despite my skepticism about the Communist Party, I assumed that it would hold my destiny. I knew the handful of CP students at UCLA, and I wanted to be recruited. One day a friend who was a history graduate student and a member of the CP youth group told me that he had proposed my name, but that my old friend Irene, who had recently moved to Los Angeles from San Francisco, had opposed my recruitment, saying that she knew me well and that I was likely to prove unreliable. She thought I didn't have the capacity for collective discipline because of my "peasant" upbringing and that I was too individualistic. I was hurt at the time, but Irene was correct, and I never did adjust to centralized and authoritarian organizations.

In fact, at that time the CP had two young white male students in that same youth group who were FBI informers. Later, when I read the memoir—I *Lived Inside the Campus Revolution*—of one of them, William Tulio Divale, written in 1970, after he had testified to various government committees, I realized why the CP's so-called radical actions on the UCLA campus had been so ineffective. The party was so undemocratic and bureaucratic that it required yes-men in its ranks, and FBI informers were perfect yes-men—they had nothing to lose by going along with the program without objection. Yet I doubt the Communist Party would have refused to recruit me had I been male, and certainly, Irene would not have opposed a man; like many token women in a group, she seemed to savor being "one of the boys."

That rejection and other closed doors and insults ratcheted up my consciousness of male supremacy. When I abandoned marriage and motherhood—the family—I believed that I had freed myself from female oppression. I was now an individual, and it was up to me to

choose my path and take full responsibility for the consequences; if I failed, I would have only myself to blame. At the time, I didn't realize that the family was actually a refuge for women, with motherhood a place of relative power. I wanted to be a historian, but to attain that goal I would have to be inducted as an honorary male and as such would be mandated to keep other women down. When I decided I wanted to become a revolutionary, I realized that the requirement was the same.

Certain titles—professor, engineer, doctor, lawyer, politician, executive, architect, fireman, soldier, astronaut, policeman, carpenter, pilot, and sailor—were male. Even the monikers of writer, poet, beatnik, protester, bohemian, actor, artist, designer, musician, and journalist were assumed to be male. Females overpopulated the underpaid and prestigeless trades such as clerical, nursing, elementary school teaching, housekeeping, service work, and telephone operators.

I tried to avoid the obvious, the information that would destroy my illusions. My mother, who had had little schooling and was often a street child when she was not in foster homes or institutionalized, had drilled into her children's minds that we could be or do anything we wanted. As I developed a class analysis of society, I came to believe that my mother was delusional in that respect. Nevertheless, I still thought that now that I was in graduate school at a top university that the rest would be up to me. I tried to forget the fact that my first-choice history department was Princeton until I discovered that it was male-only. I was simply embarrassed at my ignorance. I knew that the Yale University history department had the finest Latin American specialists and archives, but it too was off limits to women. When a fellow graduate student—a cool guy from a wealthy family who received invitations to "happenings" and knew the Warhol crowd in New York through his girlfriend, Edie Sedgwick—asked me to type a paper for him, I hesitated because I was swamped with my own work, but I eventually agreed. He was, after all, one of the few male history graduate students who didn't have a wife to do his typing. I felt grateful that Louis did not expect me or any other woman to serve his needs.

It was a set of interactions with two of my professors that finally forced me to face the truth. Today, one of these would be considered a case of sexual harassment and the other a case of sexual discrimination. But in the mid-1960s, those concepts did not exist, there were no words to describe and no laws to prohibit such behavior.

In preparation for my oral exams, I received from each of the four members of my doctoral committee a list of readings to master. One member of the committee had made it clear that he was opposed to women in the field of political history, and his list contained 1,500 books and articles, most of them in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and German, and most of which were not accessible in the university research library. That man displayed a contempt toward me that I had experienced only from my husband in the last year of our marriage.

The chairman of my doctoral committee, on the other hand, inappropriately adored me. Although he was twice my age and married, he professed his love and continually invited me out for a drink or dinner. I successfully dodged all of his advances, but I spent an inordinate amount of time doing so. My first year, when I'd had limited contact with him, he had seemed impressed with my work, and his praise gave me great confidence and incentive to excel. But in the second year, during which I became his teaching assistant, the serious overtures began and they increased as my predoctoral exams drew nearer. I knew I was dependent on my chairman's goodwill to pass my exams, particularly in light of the misogynist professor's opposition. After the exams, I would have to write my dissertation under my chairman's supervision. His favoritism toward me had become obvious to everyone, and he bragged about me publicly, calling me the most brilliant student of his career. I realized that my fellow graduate students and the other professors assumed I was having an affair with him and believed I was "sleeping my way" to success.

I confided in one of his older male graduate students, who recommended that I see a shrink. (It seemed that everyone who could afford psychoanalysis was doing it in L.A. at the time.) Through his father's best friend, a psychoanalyst, he arranged for me to enter a program sponsored

by the Psychoanalytic Institute, and I was able to see a \$200-per-hour Freudian psychoanalyst for \$5. For several months, I went twice a week to this man's luxurious Beverly Hills office. His opinion was that I needed a good husband rather than psychoanalysis: "You are attractive and well-educated and should be able to marry a doctor or lawyer." In his view, were I married, my chairman would not bother me. This, my first encounter with psychoanalysis, confirmed my suspicions of the inherent sexism of many of its premises and practitioners.

However, I did find interesting the emerging psychoanalytical approach to the study of history. Winthrop Jordan at UC Berkeley was speaking and writing about his psychohistorical study of white supremacy that was published in 1968, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*. And in the UCLA history department, Donald Meyers had applied psychoanalytical theory to his study of gender and religion in nineteenth-century United States in *The Positive Thinkers*. Although my personal experience with psychoanalysis had been negative, I was engaged by this work, and I began studying with Meyers. At least, he actually viewed women as subjects of history.

After taking Meyers's course and applying the theory to a research project on race, class, and gender under institutionalized slavery in the South, I decided to change my specialization to U.S. history. In part, that decision was based on my unspoken desire to escape my groping chairman. Meyers agreed to be my dissertation chairman. All that would be required after my predoctoral exams, which were already scheduled, would be a yearlong seminar in U.S. history. Meyers treated his male and female students equally, and I blossomed intellectually with his tutoring.

In addition to embracing psychohistory, I was following a running debate on historical interpretation of the slave system, its effects on generations of Africans, and the question of their resistance to enslavement. These questions were percolating because of the civil rights movement, and white historians and white graduate students were debating them. Ronald Takaki, a young Japanese-American historian, had been hired for a new position in black history created in our department. I was assigned

to be one of his teaching assistants and discovered that he was involved in the civil rights movement and had radical views of U.S. history. He taught for one year and was not retained, but he went on to found the Department of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley.

Historians were divided on the question of African resistance to U.S. slavery. Herbert Aptheker and Eugene Genovese, both white Marxists, carried on a heated public debate. They each visited the UCLA history department. Genovese measured slave resistance in the United States in relation to the more brutal but less institutionally organized slave regimes in the Caribbean and Brazil. Until the antislavery movement and the Underground Railroad that took great numbers of escaped Africans north and to Canada from the 1840s on, there were no large-scale slave rebellions compared with the marooners in the Caribbean, where they had carried on wars of liberation, one of which led to Haiti's independence in the early nineteenth century. Aptheker, on the other hand, described the U.S. plantation system as capitalistic, closed, and solidly buttressed by local and national laws that could prevent or crush large-scale slave rebellions, but he refused to accept that that was the only definition of resistance. He pointed to clandestine actions such as barn burning, fence cutting, stock killing, and forming Bible reading congregations. This argument that there is always resistance to oppression and the point is to look for it, identify it, and assess its consequences convinced me.

I continued with my committee through the predoctoral exams, which I passed in May 1966. Afterward, my admiring chairman and his wife took Louis and me to dinner at the Beverly Hills Hotel to celebrate my new Ph.D. candidate status, and it was there that I informed him that I had arranged to change fields. I savored watching his face crumble and his eyes well with tears.

I arranged to work with Meyers to write my dissertation on slavery and to study race, class, and gender. I was required to take a yearlong seminar in U.S. history as well as U.S. historiography. I took the seminar with a Jacksonian specialist who was fiercely anti-Marxist and contemptuous of the radical stirrings and Black Power developments with which I iden-

tified. He baited and taunted me in the seminar, especially about my perspective on U.S. imperialism in Latin America. He spoke of the Monroe Doctrine and manifest destiny as if they were dynamic and legitimate nation-building strategies. To him, the U.S. military invasion of Mexico in 1846 was logical and defensible. He viewed Andrew Jackson as a heroic figure who had constructed the basis for economic democracy in the United States by establishing the Homestead Acts to distribute small landholdings to every (white) male. I developed a more refined set of arguments against U.S. capitalism and imperialism in the process of fencing with him and the other U.S. history graduate students in that class, but it was another history graduate student in a completely different field who most profoundly affected the direction of my life.

Audrey Rosenthal became my best friend during my second year of graduate school. Audrey was engaged to my South African friend, Martin Legassick. They had met at UCLA as history graduate students the year before I arrived. After she passed her doctoral exams, she had gone to Europe for research (her specialization was nineteenth-century Russia), returning during the fall of 1965. Audrey and Martin were quite independent of each other, so I had separate friendships with each of them, and was rarely with them both at once. Martin was my political comrade whereas Audrey was my ideal sister, my fulfilled dream of female friendship. I had never experienced such profound trust in another human being, and I think she felt the same about me.

We were not alike in any way. Audrey grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in a secular Jewish middle-class family. Detroit had been her big city, just as Oklahoma City had been mine. But Detroit was Motor City, the industrial giant that made our iconic automobiles, also the seat of Motown and the urban blues of dozens of black artists. She wanted to take me there, show me her hangouts. But by the time I visited Detroit two years later, it had become a war zone following the August 1967 riots, and Audrey was dead.

Audrey was short and round, with a mass of wiry dark hair, a strikingly pretty face, and a broad, sweet smile. We were both divorced, which was

uncommon in the mid-sixties, when a divorced woman was considered a bit risqué, almost a social outcast. It was an aspect of our bonding, I think, although we didn't talk about our ex-husbands or our current boyfriends. But we talked for hours on end about the films and books we loved and hated, new music as well as the blues and jazz, politics, the Vietnam War, the right wing, Watts, Black Power. She held my hand and drilled me during the months before my doctoral exams. She had taken her exams two years before and she explained every detail of the process to me, including how to reframe the question if I didn't know the answer and how to control the situation. I may well have failed my orals had it not been for her psychological preparation and encouragement.

The day after I passed my doctoral exams, Audrey took me to an anti-war demonstration at the Century City Hotel, where the governors of all the states were meeting and President Johnson was the keynote speaker. "Now you're free. Let's do something," she said. There were only ten demonstrators, including us; the others were organizers from the local Communist Party. Surrounded by LAPD storm troopers, I felt both embarrassed and exhilarated. Audrey said, "I guess we're on somebody's list now." We saw ourselves on the evening news. A year later, there were 10,000 protestors against President Johnson at the same location, which turned into a police riot with many injuries and arrests. I wasn't there, but by then, I had done some of the work that contributed to its success.

When Martin passed his exams, he received a fellowship to do research for his dissertation in London. Audrey was writing her dissertation and could do it as well there as anywhere—and she was in love—so she decided to accompany him. She planned to leave early to visit her family in Michigan before joining Martin in London. We decided to drive across the country in my car, stopping in Oklahoma so that she could see where I came from. Then we would go to Michigan to visit her family, finally driving on to New York where she would catch her flight to London. I would then drive south to explore plantation archives for my own dissertation.

But it didn't happen. Louis complained that I had promised to spend the summer in Mexico with him, so I agreed to forgo the adventure with

Audrey. I think fear was predominant in my reasoning—fear of losing Louis, fear of seeing my family, and fear of making the return trip alone. Yet the decision didn't feel right; I wanted to spend three weeks with Audrey because I knew it might be a long time before I would see her again. I also knew that seeing the country with her would give me an interesting perspective. As it turned out, it was one of those fateful decisions that I would regret for the rest of my life.

Louis flew to Mexico City, but I took the bus with three other graduate students, riding for one long day along the tropical Pacific Coast without air-conditioning. We stayed in Guadalajara for two days, and I felt as if I were back at home in San Antonio, with mariachis and men in cowboy hats and boots. In Mexico City, we spent the first week being tourists, taking our friends to the bullfights and the Ballet Folklórico.

Louis stayed at his family's home and arranged for me to live with a family friend, Kati Horna, and her twenty-year-old daughter, Nora, who was a medical student. Kati had been a single mother since her beloved husband died unexpectedly of a heart attack some years before. A photographer, she eked out a living taking photographs for the unique political comic books so popular in Mexico. Kati's small, crumbling house evoked an old-time bohemian atmosphere, with no heat or hot water and only occasional electricity. Cooking and laundry were done in a small courtyard.

Kati was the first professional visual artist I'd spent time with. But more important to me was that Kati was an anarchist and a revolutionary who had left her Hungarian home for Spain to fight against Franco's fascist troops. While in Spain, Kati married a Spanish anarchist comrade and at the end of the war, they fled with thousands of others to Mexico, which under the socialist government of Lázaro Cárdenas provided generous refuge.

I already had read and admired Emma Goldman and Ricardo Flores Magón and identified with the anarcho-syndicalist Wobblies, but Kati took me more deeply into the theory and practice of anarchism. She explained that the word "anarchy" comes from the Greek word *anarchies*, meaning without a leader. Anarchists believe that centralized, hierarchical authorities—such as the state and all its tools—exist to keep people

under control. People should be free from government, and communities of like-minded individuals should form loose, decentralized units based on mutual assistance and cooperation. Kati described the successful experiment inside the Spanish Republic, before the Fascists crushed it. While I stayed in her home, I read Bakunin and Kropotkin in Spanish by candlelight night after night.

Kati's house was filled with art, politics, and Spanish civil war stories — accompanied by songs strummed on guitars, red wine, and wonderful, simple food. The stories inspired me, but the nostalgia frightened me, just as the U.S. Communist Party nostalgia for the 1930s did. I could almost see myself twenty years hence telling old war stories after the war was lost. But I was very content at Kati's house. Louis would come by every morning and often we would go to one of the fine French restaurants with one or another of his childhood friends. He took me to see Diego Rivera murals and other sites, and we spent a day in the new anthropology museum. We were both starved for movies and sat through some awful, dubbed Hollywood adventure films. Once or twice a week I accompanied Louis's mother to the huge open-air market.

I grew to love Mexico City that summer. My favorite time of day in the summer rainy season was just after the midafternoon shower when the sooty air was washed and cleaned and the sun low. People would be scurrying back to their jobs after *la comida*, the afternoon meal at home with family, and the maids were out buying *pan dulce* for *la merienda*, the light evening meal. There was the wafting sweet smell of *pan dulce*, the fresh-baked sweet bread, and the streets were clogged with chattering, good-natured people, refreshed and energetic but not tense; there was none of the edge of violence as in U.S. cities during rush hours. Small boys singing out the headlines hawked the evening papers, still wet from the press. The sky would begin to turn orange and red, casting a glow over the faces of people, and then, abruptly, night would fall.

On one of those evenings, walking in the teeming crowds, I heard the newspaper boys' chanting "Sud Africa, asesinato del presidente." I read that a temporary parliamentary messenger, a Mozambique immigrant of mixed

racial descent whose motives were not clear, had stabbed Hendrik Verwoerd, the president of South Africa, to death in the parliamentary chamber. Verwoerd had been prime minister of South Africa since 1958. Under his leadership, South Africa had declared itself a republic and split with the British Commonwealth. He created the "Bantu education" system, arguing that the native people had to meet the demands of the market and that since there was no place for the native in the white community above the level of servant, they should be taught only manual skills. As he put it, "Until now the Bantu has been subject to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the greener pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze." Verwoerd asked, "What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?" By the time of the assassination, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-African Congress had been virtually crushed, their entire leaderships in exile or in prison. Nearly 500 activists were under house arrest and 1,300 were political prisoners. Over a million African agricultural tenants and squatters and 500,000 city dwellers had been removed and resettled in "homelands."

I knew from Martin that the South African resistance movement was at a low point—it was one of the reasons he had decided to return to London to work for the movement full time. There was no political protest anywhere in the country, whereas the security police force had tripled in the past few years. The South African economy was booming and there was little international attention, particularly with most Western political activists focused on the Vietnam War. I worried that Martin might join the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK), the armed wing of the ANC. I had no idea that it was Audrey about whom I should worry.

After returning to L.A., I felt quite independent of Louis. In mid-October, I wrote to Audrey in London:

I really don't see him much since we returned—there is a sort of coolness between us, that I don't quite understand, but probably

I create it. I really don't know what will happen to our relationship; I don't see how it will survive, but shakier alliances have, but I do get tired of thinking in terms of survival. I stay at school from 8 to 5, and then I come to my place dead tired and read.

I remained a teaching assistant in Latin American History since that schedule had been made in the spring semester before I'd taken my doctoral exams and changed my field to U.S. history. But my heart was in my dissertation. I had found the perfect project. I wrote Audrey:

I'm terribly excited because I have decided upon a dissertation topic that is so interesting and so possible. I am going to do a biography of a plantation. The manuscripts, family records, everything are at the University of Virginia. I plan to do the sort of study the anthropologist does of an extended family group. I plan to take it from its formation through the first generation after the Civil War, as a small cell moving through time, trying to see how it saw what happened outside it. I was amazed when I came upon the idea that no one had done this sort of thing, but they haven't. It is a very good sort of project for me, because it will not allow me to become philosophical, though I will secretly. So, I will go to Virginia during the spring quarter and microfilm what I can't finish. The university finally came through with \$400 research expenses for me.

Each Wednesday noon I stood vigil against the Vietnam War. Audrey and I had been among the first to join when Donald Kalish, chairman of the philosophy department, started it with only a handful of people. Soon the line had snaked around the campus. One of the graduate students from the first-year seminar, a retired army colonel who had fought in Korea and was a gung-ho patriot, began showing me the letters from his twenty-year-old son who was an infantryman in Vietnam. The former military man was distraught and confused by what his son was reporting, especially the now well-known, seemingly mindless slaughter of water

buffalo, which troubled the boy, as well as the fact that they were killing ordinary peasants. I told the colonel that it sounded like the Indian wars when soldiers killed the buffalo, but as in that case, I suspected it was not mindless but a way to cripple Vietnamese peasant agriculture. The war was no longer an abstraction after reading those letters.

A successful teach-in on campus during that fall of 1966 helped raise consciousness, although only a small percentage of students and faculty were involved. Noam Chomsky and Herbert Marcuse were the main speakers, but there were dozens more, and the event went on for fourteen hours, with thousands crowded into the student union cafeteria. I was distressed that none of the speakers were women. Dorothy Healey of the Communist Party was scheduled to speak but the Progressive Labor Party people—the Maoists—disrupted her presentation. That was my first personal encounter with infighting on the Left. Audrey had been writing from London about the sectarianism between the Soviet-affiliated African National Congress and the Maoist Pan-African Congress in the anti-apartheid movement. Now I understood what she was talking about and how nasty it could be.

It was hard not to politically give up on the UCLA campus. While other universities were organizing demonstrations against the war, we had a once-a-week vigil and a tepid teach-in. I complained to Audrey, wishing I were in London, which seemed a revolutionary paradise in comparison:

I see immobile, well-kept faces staring blankly into space, and not much fear, even, anymore. The grotesqueness of this day seeing thousands of well-fed, proper UCLA undergraduates storming Westwood rioting, causing great havoc, bringing out as many policemen. What were they protesting—the only protest I have seen at UCLA? They were protesting that the football team was not invited to the fucking Rose Bowl. Everyone thought it was cute; I cried . . . The war goes on, and prices go up. It is really quite frightening. Almost everyone undisguisedly hates Johnson, but in most cases the

hate finds its outlet in satire or a shrug. There is less of the patriotic crap; the newsmen are getting more and more cutting in their remarks (no more astute in their analyses, however). One hardly ever hears someone saying that Johnson is a "good politician" anymore.

Yet I was not completely hopeless and I did more than complain. Also, I was blessed with a new friendship that helped accelerate my political activity on campus.

Regie Melden, a brilliant, beautiful, and very young graduate student in European history, was the best-read, most intellectual woman I had ever met. She was raised as an only child to assume her father's role; he was a University of California philosophy professor, renowned as a specialist in phenomenology. She had skipped grades and was only twenty years old upon entering graduate school. We had met at department events before becoming friends. I thought she was cold and aloof, and her beauty and brains intimidated me. But when we ended up in the same room with a handful of male teaching assistants and a couple of young professors from across campus, the barrier came down. Regie admitted that my reputation and I had intimidated her as well. The purpose of the meeting was to form a teaching union on campus that would include professors *and* their teaching assistants. We wanted to affiliate with an established trade union, perhaps even the notorious Teamsters, to give us more clout. I wrote to Audrey about the triumph and the frustrating struggle:

My most impressive social achievement to date (the first one, in fact) is the successful organization of TA's and RA's [teaching assistants and research assistants] in affiliation with the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Teachers). We have a militant 200. We are hardly poised for the kill, but it is perhaps better than nothing. Christ, I feel like throwing Molotov cocktails.

We had some immediate impact through our organizing efforts. The teaching assistants agreed to relate our teaching materials to the Vietnam

War and never let a class period go by without demonstrating our opposition to it.

At the same time, we were searching for a way to resist the avalanche of newly elected Governor Reagan's actions against the entire state university system, which were designed to dismantle the gains made by the Berkeley free speech movement. Reagan had based his campaign for governor on three issues: put students back in their place, crush black activism, and root out communists. His first act was to fire the university chancellor, Clark Kerr, and to militarize the California Highway Patrol, which was quickly dubbed Ronnie's Rangers. Fighting communism was the underlying rationale for crushing the student, antiwar, and black movements. Loyalty oaths as a requirement to teach in California universities were introduced. To the Reaganites, free speech, black power, and opposition to the Vietnam War comprised the three pillars of the communist conspiracy.

In January, Regie and I drove to San Francisco to attend a Human Be-In. The event was the perfect blend of politics, music, and celebration of life that we were starved for in Los Angeles. Held on the Polo Field of Golden Gate Park, Allen Ginsberg and local rock bands—including the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane—inspired frenzied and creative dancing on the grass. Hell's Angels were out in force and greeted the love children as brothers and sisters, handing out flowers and incense. The Diggers burned money, and black and white political militants gave rousing speeches. All the while, an army of Zen Buddhists in saffron robes meditated. The line between art and culture blurred; the style at the Human Be-In was hippy, the content anti-war and revolutionary.

We were annoyed by the absence of women on stage, the exception being Grace Slick, lead singer for the Airplane. We roamed around the streets of the Haight that had been transformed from the gritty black and white working-class neighborhood it had been only a few years before to a series of head shops, throngs of very young blissed-out white people blowing bubbles and generally grooving.

For a short time the war, racism, and the atomic bomb seemed like a bad dream from which we had awakened. Then the weather that had